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VISITING MY RELATIONS,

AND ITS RESULTS;

A SERIES OF SMALL EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF A RECLUSE.

By
Mary Ann Kelly

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VISITING MY RELATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

An effort to start—and its Success.

I AM one of the species called "old bachelors," and of course, have a good many poor relations; most of whom I have aided in the best way I could, by helping them to help themselves, and I am thankful to believe that, on the whole, I have pretty well succeeded, for they are most of them getting on tolerably well in the world. I have the happiness also, to call some affluent people my cousins; but the postman does not so often visit my door with their communications, as with those of my less favoured relatives. It happened, however, a few months since, that he brought me a missive from my distant relation Edward Seymour, accompanied by one from my nephew Frank Melmoth;

and as both these epistles had the effect of taking me to London, an event which had not befallen me for several years, I shall here transcribe them, giving precedence to that of my cousin :—

DEAR MR. MIDDLETON,

You and I have never met since my father's death, now many years ago. We are neither of us in the spring time of life, but travelling down its autumnal side, when most people look round for the *compagnons de voyage* with whom they began their journey, and if they find any of them left, they like to amble on with them the rest of the way. You were a sociable fellow enough at college, how is it that one can never draw you from your cave in Northumberland? You will say, perhaps, that I have never tried. I may not have pursued the matter with much urgency, because what I heard of your determined seclusion, discouraged me from expressing as often, and as warmly as I felt, a wish to see you as my guest. Let me, however, now, in all sincerity say, that if you will spend a little time with us at your own convenience, it will give great pleasure both to my wife, and your old friend and relative,

EDWARD SEYMOUR.

"Very civil indeed," said I, "but I believe I shall not avail myself of it;" and I folded the letter and laid it aside, to take up, with something between a groan and a sigh, the other epistle. Poor

Frank's letters were of the sort, which, if it could be avoided, you would never read. He was one of my relatives whom I found it next to impossible to serve; and having administered for several years, to his unceasing "little calls" for money, I had for the last three or four, become inexorable to his appeals; believing I should do him more real service by constraining him to depend upon his own exertions, than to go on responding as I had done, to his continual necessities. He was a good tempered, thoughtless fellow as a youth, but always disposed to be idle and impulsive. It was in a sudden freak of fancy, that he had married before he was two-and-twenty, and had been in debt and in difficulties ever since, though that event occurred a dozen years before. What little patrimony his father left him, had long since disappeared; but he had a good salary in a mercantile house, where he was head clerk; and with proper self-denial and economy, there could be no doubt that he might do pretty well. But economy and self-denial were wanting; though in place of them there was never missing a plentiful crop of hopes and expectations, as the following letter may manifest.

My dear Uncle,

You will be pleased I am sure, to hear that I have had an offer of joining as junior partner in a most lucrative concern, the particulars of which I will detail in my next. I will only now say, that

there cannot be the shadow of a doubt of its producing for my share only, at least a thousand a year. The only impediment is my not possessing the sum of one thousand pounds, which I should be required to lay down, previous to my acceptance in the firm. Now, my dear uncle, seeing I have so much at stake, if you would stand my friend just this once, depend upon my speedy and honourable payment of the generous and friendly loan, and expect the heartfelt and undying gratitude of

Your most affectionate nephew,

F. MELMOTH.

"I dare say, indeed!" said I, "a thousand pounds! a pretty modest request! But we'll soon settle that;" and I reached out my hand to my writing case; arrested, however, by a habit I have cultivated very assiduously, of never writing a letter in a passion, "I'll take a walk first," I thought, and accordingly I wandered forth from my habitation.

It was a lovely day, and all about me looked lively and pleasant; much more so, I must confess, than the interior of my spirit just at that particular time. "To think of his assurance, after the times without number, in which I have replied to this request of 'standing his friend!'" and I went over in my mind's eye, this, that, and the other loan, that always was to be, but never yet had been repaid. "O, there's no end to it, I wont, I positively wont," and I was getting more and more angry, my ex-

citement a little accelerated by the gambols of my gay young spaniel (the invariable companion of my walks) round a brood of partridges sheltered under a coop on my lawn.

"Come here! come here, sir, directly, how dare you frighten the partridges; take that, and that!" Poor Dash yelped most piteously, as I dealt him a pretty smart clip or two with my walking stick, and walked away with his tail between his legs, and a mournful look at me, which said very plainly, "You have spoiled my pleasure for to-day."

"Is that right?" said my better self to me, as I pursued my moody way. "Right! no, to be sure; very wrong indeed. But every thing goes wrong when one is out of temper. And why am I out of temper?" I am fond of what a clever American writer calls "fronting the fact;" so I went down into my inner world to look at the real cause of my discomposure; for, though my nephew's letter had somewhat of an irritating tendency in it, there were so many easy ways of settling that question, that I felt assured it was not there that my quiet had received such a concussion. No; it was the careless and unconscious way in which Mr. Seymour had swept his hand over the chords of my feelings, that awoke a painful sensibility that all was not exactly in tune there. "*You were a sociable fellow enough at college—How is it that one can never draw you from your care in Northumberland?*" were words re-uttered to me by an inquirer, to

whose appeals I make it a principle to give very earnest attention.

"How is it, indeed?" said I; "come, simplify the matter, don't be sentimental, and talk about the vanity of the world, disappointed affections, and so on; but put the saddle on the right horse, and ride away for the goal of truth."

"Yes, I believe that's the right reading of the matter," was my response to the cogitations that occupied my mind during a walk of an hour's duration. "It is just so,—I have lived in old bachelorhood, with all these pleasant comforts about me, (and I glanced at the luxurious library chair in which, as soon as I returned home, I ensconced myself, and then at the rows of volumes on the shelves around me) and reading philosophy by my fire-side, I have unconsciously, but most decidedly, been rejoicing in the serene 'single blessedness,' wherein

> 'I am monarch of all I survey,
> My right there is none to dispute;'

and for the last dozen years or so, have been growing into an unsocial, cynical fellow."

"But you have given away a great deal of money in that time," said obliging self-love.

"Pshaw! as if one could purchase a pound's worth of virtue! — and as if the gift of one's sympathy, and influence, and interest in the doings of one's kind, were not the best and loveliest of life's charities. Well, I'll go — Yes, I'll be off before

the impulse cools — to-morrow." And I rung the bell for Mrs. Bridge, my housekeeper, to inquire if my wardrobe was in travelling trim for the next day.

If I had proposed a voyage to India, I could not have excited more astonishment in her mind, so unusual a thing was it for me to quit my habitation. All my tackle being pronounced company proof, and my preparations completed, I set forth on the ensuing day, having written to my nephew to say, that if convenient, I would be his guest for a few days, and talk over with him the affairs of his letter. I postponed till my arrival in town, my reply to Mr. Seymour, intending, like a veteran in human life, as I was, to see a little of Madame his wife, before I made myself his guest. Such a thing as being acceptable to the master, and rather in the way of the mistress of the mansion, being a case I had certainly either heard or read of, in the course of my transactions with sublunary matters.

A day of whirl and clatter, and flying over the earth after a fashion quite new to me, brought me to the station in Euston Square, where Frank was waiting to conduct me to his house.

There is something in the sight of a face that one has not seen for years, an "old familiar face," that wakes up the genial feelings of the heart; and I returned Frank's cordial shake of the hand with genuine sympathy.

An omnibus ride of three miles or so, brought

us to his house in the suburbs of the metropolis; and there we found Mrs. Melmoth, ready with her two eldest children, to give me another welcome.

It was my first sight of her; for Frank and I had not met since his marriage, which, like the marriage of most young men at two-and-twenty, had been voted a silly affair by the seniors of his family. There was beauty enough left in Mrs. Melmoth after the lapse of twelve years, to testify some excuse for his indiscretion; and from the slight opportunity I had of judging, during the first evening's intercourse, she seemed exceedingly good-natured and kindly disposed; though I doubted, whether there might not be in her character, a shade of affectation, which of all the shades in life's many coloured web, I have the least toleration for. The fact is, I don't understand intricate machinery. A set of phrases bewilders me; and I believe it was my impatience and impracticability touching the prettinesses of genteel intercourse, that occasioned me to get into my hermitage in Northumberland, that I might be as far away from them as I could, and live at my ease; — the most agreeable mode of living that I know of. Still, I query whether it be altogether the right one, any more than it is right for a man in health, to be in his dressing-gown and slippers all the day long.— No, no;—one must turn out sometimes, I suppose, in a dancing suit, and attitudinize with the rest of the world.

Good Mrs. Melmoth, I soon found to be pretty commonly attired *en tableau*. Her mind appeared to be always at a *bal masqué*, where every thing was "so sweet!—so lovely!" To have looked at her pictures of human affairs, you would have thought that guilt and sorrow were names without meaning. Every thing was "*couleur de rose*."—"My husband! my children! my dear mamma! my precious sister!" all her kith and kin, down to the twentieth cousin, were pattern people;—so amiable, so beloved, "so worthy, dear uncle Middleton, of being beloved!" In short, her whole acquaintance were quite fit for heaven; where I sometimes wished them safely deposited, when I had to listen to an hour's sentimentality in their behalf. In the meantime, while she was rejoicing in all this moonshine, the practical matters of fact of the family, seemed to me to be going to ruin as directly and decidedly as possible. The children, of whom there were six, and all at home, were self-willed and quarrelsome, as might be expected, when no sort of control was exercised over them. The father was absent all day at his place of business, and when he came home at night, he was too tired to trouble himself with domestic affairs; and the mother, as I have said, would not recognize such a thing as evil in any thing or any body, much less in her own children. I thought it possible I might be serviceable in opening her eyes to the character of two flaunting female servants, when I informed

her that coming home rather unexpectedly the preceding day, when she and the children were out, I found these her domestics taking a hot lunch with a policeman; but she received my intelligence with the utmost tranquillity, and observed with a benevolent smile, that "she liked to encourage kindliness of feeling between relations."—"Policeman Simmons is brother to Jane, the cook," said she.

"I don't believe it," said I; recollecting the sort of farewell, which, coming rather hastily upon the reputed brother and sister, as they were taking leave of each other at the kitchen door, I very unintentionally witnessed. "I don't believe he is any more her brother than I am."

"Dear uncle Middleton," and she looked up at me with the most complacent expression of countenance, "are you not the least in the world, just the very least, inclined to be suspicious?"

"People who have the wear and tear of threescore years upon them, are apt to be distrustful of appearances," I replied.

"But are we not commanded to think no evil?" she asked.

"We are equally commanded to 'prove all things,'" said I, "in order that we may 'hold fast that which is good:' and it is this act of proving which I want you to practise a little more," I was going to add, but was prevented by the presence of three of the children, all wrangling for each

other's toys, and interrupting the possibility of any conversation, by every one in turn, and at last altogether, claiming her interference, and calling to her, "Ma! isn't it my box?—I say, Ma,—Ma —a—a," louder and louder, with vehement tugs at each sleeve of her dress, while she, used to their noise and importunities, went on smiling and talking, mixing her replies to me, with ("Not now, precious,—I am engaged, darling, just now,")— "but you see, uncle Middleton,"—("my sweetest Emma,")—

"My good children," said I, "for you are going to be good, I know;—I make all children good, wherever I am;—don't you see I am talking with your mamma, and she wants to give me her attention? Now, all of you go and play somewhere else for a little while."

"I dare say I have your leave," and I turned to her,—but she gave a very clouded assent to their departure, as though she doubted whether she were not safer under the protection of their presence from what might be coming. I wanted the opportunity, however, of doing something energetic; for I had been there a week, and had effected nothing decisive by my presence, except indeed, most decidedly declining to advance to Frank the requested loan of a thousand pounds; the purpose for which he desired it being, as I found upon inquiry, a rash, ill-advised speculation, which it was happy for him he had not the means of entering into.

I had handed the children to the door, with very little resistance on their part, as they had discovered during the interval of a week that I was accustomed to carry my point; but the exuberant tenderness of mamma, requiring "a kiss from darling Selina," (a fractious girl of four years old, who had only to set up a cry to get from her mother every thing she wanted) there was, of course, a roar of a quarter of an hour; and with a rather cold "Excuse me, uncle Middleton, but I must just see my sweet pet composed a little," she retired with her offspring, leaving me to take the chance of her coming back to finish our conference.

Nothing had passed between Mrs. Melmoth and me but courtesy and kindness; yet at the end of three days, we stood in distinctly felt, though not expressed repulsion towards each other. At the close of a week it was manifest that she avoided being alone with me. Perhaps she could not tell why; in fact, she would not if she could. She would not have allowed to herself that it was because I might be going to rebuke or to advise her; for what subject could there be either for rebuke or advice in a person "who lived only to make others happy?" Such, at least, was the purpose for which I, more than once, had heard her say that she valued her existence.

She did come back, but it was only to inform me that the cook wanted to consult with her about the dinner, and she could not stay just then.

"I will wait your return," said I; "for as I am going to-morrow, I shall hardly find another opportunity of having any conversation with you."

"Going to-morrow!" and she looked very much surprized, and rather disconcerted. "I had not heard you mention any thing of your departure, and I was in hopes you would have been our guest for a much longer time."

"It has been longer now, my dear lady, than I expected; for if you saw my letter to Frank, you may remember I said I should be his visitor for a few days only. But go and settle your business with the cook, and I will wait your return."

"O, that is in no hurry," she replied; "I shall have little appetite for dinner, now that I find our dear, kind uncle is so soon and so suddenly to leave us."

I said civil things and such truisms as that "the best of friends must part," and so on; "but what I wanted to say to you, more particularly," I continued, "than to Frank (because your elder children being girls, you, I think, should be first consulted in the matter) is this. The two eldest seem to me to require more control than they get; and——

"Dear creatures!" she exclaimed, "they have such fine spirits!"

"Yes, yes," said I, "their fine animal spirits are very good things, but they require regulating and rightly directing. Now, my dear lady, excuse my

plain speaking, it's my way; I cannot, for the life of me, beat about the bush, and take my bird by a stratagem. I *must* come to the point in the shortest possible way."

"Of course; it is the thing of all others that I most admire," she observed. "Stratagems and beating the bush, as you call it, are means of compassing an end, which I, of all people, least understand. My precious mamma always inculcated the simplest and plainest truth upon her children. 'Whatever you do, my darlings,' she used to say, dear, dear soul!—" and she took out her pocket handkerchief. Was it very wicked of me to think that her tears (for she actually cried) were more those of annoyance and vexation than of an affectionate tribute to the virtues of her "dear mamma?" If such an evil surmise did cross my mind, I did not act upon it, for I took her emotion as she intended, and said all that seemed necessary on the subject. But time pressed, and I could not diverge into the "wandering mazes," quite foreign to the point, where she was leading me.

"What you say, dear Mrs. Melmoth, in praise of the sort of education you have received, is perfectly correct, I make no doubt," said I, "but I want now to talk with you about the education of your own children; at least of the two eldest. Your affection and tenderness of feeling naturally blind you to the danger they are in of being quite spoilt by excessive indulgence."

"O, uncle Middleton, you forget, I doubt, the old proverb of bachelors' wives and maids' children," and she laughed, but not pleasantly. "Here's a touch of nature," I thought, "at last! Well, I would rather have it, disagreeable as it may be, than the *tableau.*"

"I am quite aware," said I, "that it is very easy, too easy indeed, for persons to see no difficulties in very trying circumstances, when those circumstances are such as they have no experience of. I will let it pass then, that as an old bachelor, I know nothing of the habits and tempers of children, or of the best way of dealing with them; but I know something of human nature in general. I know what it turns out at maturity, when an indulged childhood and youth have prevented the growth of those habits of simplicity and self-control which are constantly wanted in the business of life, and which must be inculcated in the individual's earliest years, or never; at all events, they are not obtained in after life, without such exceeding pain and difficulty, that few persons have courage to attempt the acquisition of them."

"When you speak of self-control," said she, "I will admit that their high spirits may sometimes run away with my dear children; as I should like to know where the children are to be found, whom they do not run away with. But with regard to simplicity of mind, I believe there are few more guileless, artless creatures than they are."

"In order to agree to that," said I, "we must come to a definition of the word simplicity, which would take up too much time. I wish to state to you the way in which I propose to soften the disappointment I have been obliged to inflict upon Frank (as he has no doubt told you), in my declining to assist him with the loan he requested."

I had the utmost difficulty to keep her down to the point at this part of our conference; so much had she to say respecting the advantages that were *certain* to accrue, if the project Frank had in view *could* but have been assisted by my kind aid. But I was steadfast as a rock in saying "No!" to it; and as a panacea for the pain I might be giving, I offered to take upon myself the expense of educating the two elder children for three years, in a plain, useful way, becoming their station, provided she would consent to send them to boarding school; the mere circumstance of their getting away from home, for that time, appearing to me an advantage that was worth purchasing at almost any price.

She fought hard for what she called the preferable plan of having a governess in the house; "the dear children so much wanted a mother's protection," she said.

"Now," said I, "will you forgive me, and will you rightly understand me, when I say they want to be protected *from* their mother?"

"No, really," she replied, "I cannot understand you; I can conceive no possibility of children wanting to be protected from their mother."

"They do though," said I; "they want to be protected very often from the excessive anxiety and the over indulgence of a doting mother. They want to get into an atmosphere more bracing, more conducive to spiritual health. They want to be taught to *rough it* a little."

"I am not fond of rough measures," she replied. "Excuse me, dear uncle Middleton, but I think you are."

"I am fond of truth, my dear," said I, "and that's sometimes a rough thing."

"Nobody loves truth better than I do," she replied.

I stood a few minutes, doubtful whether or not to open some of my secret feelings to her. "Was I altogether sufficiently convinced of her besetting weaknesses to speak to her about them? And if I were, could I reasonably hope that my suggestions would be rightly received and valued? I would far rather *not* allude to them; that was very clear. That I should get myself more and more disliked, was just as certain. But here she was before me; a kindly creature in many respects; a creature young enough to be my daughter;—my age and the experience it yielded, might possibly give some influence to my words; at all events, thought I, duty is not a safe thing to slight; and the speaking of plain truth, as opportunity serves, more particularly when, as in the present case it seems to require it, is a duty of the most unquestionable kind."

I resumed my seat then; and without waiting till she had finished a speech, on which indeed she had been engaged during the whole of my mental soliloquy, but of which not a word had caught my attention, I thus addressed, or rather attempted to address her, for no sooner had I uttered the words "Nothing is so deceptive, my dear Mrs. Melmoth, as the human heart," than she instantly took them up by observing that she was deeply aware of that fact.

"Of course it 'is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.' But I am afraid it is getting very late,"—and she got up from her chair—I begged her to resume it for a few minutes longer: "Suffer me just to say what I have to say;" and I took hold of her hand, for I seemed to have a foreshadowing of her flitting away bodily, if I did not secure her fast.

"You said just now that nobody loved truth better than yourself."

"Nobody does," she replied, looking very red and angry. "Have you ever detected me in an untruth?"

"I am not speaking of truth in the form of categorical questions and answers, my dear Mrs. Melmoth," said I. "Assuredly I have never, in the short time I have been with you, heard you at any time that I am aware of, say the thing that was not. The truth, which, according to my conception of the term, you are not altogether so fond

of as you take yourself to be, is the truth of things and people. You like to see them, not as they are in themselves, but as you wish them to be."

"I like to put the best construction I can, both upon things and people," she replied.

"The best construction," said I, "is that which is most consistent with truth. Now, it is not consistent with truth to persuade ourselves that there is no such thing as evil in the world. That servants and children, for instance, are never artful, but quite to be trusted at all times and in all things."

"I cannot but think you are very severe upon a helpless, unprotected part of human nature," said she. "I should be sorry myself, I must confess, I should be very sorry, because servants are poor and have their bread to earn, and because children *are* children, and have not the judgment and experience of men and women, to set them down at once as artful and wicked, and never to be believed in a word they say."

"I should be quite as sorry as you to do any thing of the sort; not only because it would be very malignant and wicked, but also because it would be very silly," said I. "It is not because servants are poor and have their bread to earn, nor yet because children *are* children, that I happened to illustrate my meaning by any allusion to them as requiring more watchfulness, and a more accurate judgment than I think you inclined to extend

towards them; but because they are, by their position in human affairs, especially liable to be tempted to deceive their superiors, and because that I think you, in your condition as a ruler over them, are not sufficiently aware of that fact."

"Indeed she was," she said; "I was quite mistaken if"——

"My dear Mrs. Melmoth," and I rose from my chair as glad as herself to end our dialogue, for I felt that I was making no way, and that we were only arguing in a circle; she invariably asserting that she saw things just as I did *not* think she saw them. "My dear lady," I continued, "the long and the short of it is, that we do not think alike; and if we were to talk for seven years, we should be no nearer the mark. I may, perhaps, be somewhat too austere in my views of human nature and its affairs,"—

"Indeed you are," said she, breaking in hastily upon me, "indeed you are. The world is not so bad as you think it. It is a beautiful world; Oh, a be-a-utiful world!" and she drew out the twice-uttered epithet with an affected drawl, that brought anything but the idea of beauty over my mind.

"It is a mixed world," said I, "it has its beauty and its goodness, no doubt; but it has also its awful evils, mysterious and overwhelming; and oh, Mrs. Melmoth, to lose sight of these, to forget how prominent, how important a part they play in life's drama, to forget that we have a nature near us, full

of deception, full of corruption, liable to fall at every turn, liable to be deluded, and most deluded when things are most fair-seeming; to try and smother these, the greatest of all realities, by setting a troop of visionary fancies to trample upon, and dance jigs over them, this is to live in a fool's paradise, the waking from which will be dreadful."

"Indeed it would," said she, "but you make me laugh, you are so earnest about it."

I thought I had never heard so disagreeable a laugh in my life, or one that had less of mirth in it; my temper, naturally somewhat short in the article of patience, was indeed sorely tried by the impracticable character of her mind. "But be tranquil, John," said I to myself, "you are not married to her, my man, think of that!"

I made a short *resumé* of my proposal touching the education of the girls; and receiving, as indeed I did not doubt but I should, her consent to arrange it with Frank, I quitted her presence, and betook myself to an hour's solitude to regain my mental strength; for I felt in spirit, much, I think as a man might do in body, who had spent the best part of an hour in knocking his head against a wall. I had not the least difficulty in obtaining my nephew's ready assent to my offer respecting his two eldest children. He was one of the best tempered of men, and enjoyed life in his own way as much as his wife, but without any sentiment. *His* happiness chiefly consisted in a lounge on the sofa

in the evening, a sight of the pictures in Punch, and when he was not too tired, the reading of some of the articles in it, which he would good-naturedly give out for general amusement, calling our attention by exclaiming, "Look here, Emma," to his wife, "Uncle, now just listen;" whilst, "Capital, isn't it?" was his invariable comment at the conclusion.

I confess I was not sorry when the day arrived which made me the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Seymour; a morning visit that I had already paid at their house at Hampstead, having sufficed to convince me that I need entertain no doubts respecting my cordial welcome from the mistress of it.

CHAPTER II.

Old Times.

IT WAS never more sensible of the value of a well-ordered household, than in making a transition from the abode of Frank Melmoth to that of Mr. Seymour; for as in the former, every thing was in confusion and tumult from morning till night, so in the other, quietness and punctuality pervaded the interior movements of the family in every particular.

This order and regularity might in some degree result from the absence of children in the establishment; Mr. Seymour having but two sons, and both away from home, the one at school, and the other at college; but there was an essential difference in the natures of the female rulers of the domestic affairs of the two households, which necessarily produced its respective fruits of comfort and discomfort. Nothing could be imagined in greater contrast than the characters of these two ladies; for, as Mrs. Melmoth was disposed to see nothing

painful or disagreeable in human affairs, and to slide over them with the same self-complacency, and much in the same way as she would have danced a waltz or a polka, Mrs. Seymour, on her part, could never take a sufficiently tight grasp of them. She loved, she hated, she hoped, she feared, she did every thing to the uttermost; yet wondered all the while how any body could feel a moment's anxiety about "so vain—so wretched a thing as this world!"

A fruitful source of disquietude to her at this time, was the query as to what place her son would occupy in the list of honours, when he took his degree at the ensuing bachelor's commencement at Cambridge. She was clever and ambitious, and had set her heart upon his standing very high on this occasion, though Mr. Seymour with better knowledge of the talent required, and of the probability of his son's acquirements not reaching the mark, continually endeavoured to lower her expectations of the result. Then he was "so cold, so calculating, so hard"—at which he used to laugh, and make the best of it; but I was often pained to see, through a veil of assumed gaiety, how much too adhesive a grasp of sublunary matters, for her own peace, this ardent woman was taking.

I could sympathize from similarity of feeling, with the acute sensibility she experienced in relation to some of the minor miseries of life; and had I known her before she married Ned Seymour, as we used to call him in college, I could have prophesied from

my knowledge of him that he was not the man for her.

Seymour was a person who determined to be happy, not after the fashion of Mrs. Melmoth, by adopting any wishy-washy views of human affairs, in place of looking at facts; but by varying his life with as many fresh objects, and as large an acquaintance as possible. He was too sensible a man not to know that there were such things as sorrow, disappointment, ill temper, cross accidents, and numberless other disagreeable and painful things to be touched and handled in getting through the world; but both by nature and principle, he made it his business to put them out of his way as fast as he could. His company was much liked and sought at college, where I was his contemporary, and very intimate friend, though somewhat his senior. On leaving the university, he had entered himself at Lincoln's Inn, and nominally followed the profession of the law; but his private fortune sufficing for his living in the most comfortable independence, it was merely the name of a profession that he adopted. He had married, some three-and-twenty years previous to this time, a young lady of nineteen (his present wife) respecting whom he used to rave as the realization of his conceptions of female perfection; for he always anticipated in his visions of matrimonial felicity, the possession of a well-informed and highly accomplished wife, and such a one he certainly obtained. But, though quick

and sharp, and very able in his college pursuits, Seymour was not gifted with much penetration into character, neither had he any depth of tender or impassioned feeling. He fell in love with the agreeableness and mental superiority of his lady, and taking it for granted that she could bustle through the world, and shove things and people to the right and left, as he did, when they were disagreeable and stood in his way, he embarked with her on the ocean of life, "youth at the prow, and pleasure at the helm," nothing doubting of a prosperous voyage.

I had not been long their guest, when I detected the dissimilarity which infused just enough bitterness in their cup to do *him*, certainly, and perhaps her a great deal of good. For Seymour wanted a little to trouble him, to prevent his yielding too entirely to a resolution of enjoying himself; a purpose which, when constantly and systematically acted upon, is likely to engender a degree of neglect towards the happiness of other people, and to those demands for sympathy and attention, which are sure to meet us in our journey through life, and which it is as much our interest as it is our duty to respond to willingly;—inasmuch as our own time for suffering will not fail to come.

Nothing could be pleasanter than the society in which he mixed, consisting, as it chiefly did, of the *élite* of well-informed, thoroughly educated, and highly agreeable men, from different Inns of Court, government offices, &c. The *just-enough and*

no-more style of their conversation, that touch-and-go, so light and skilful, which gave you at once the whole gist of the topic of the day,—were amusing enough to one who, like myself, had been vegetating so long in an obscure corner of the kingdom; varying my life only by an interchange of drowsy dinners with the heavy squire and squiress, and not much livelier vicar of the village. Still more than the two or three meetings of this sort which we had with our juniors, did I enjoy a dinner, at which he contrived to assemble some of our old college contemporaries; men upon whom I had not cast a glance for more than five-and-twenty years.—Twenty-five years of the period between thirty-five and sixty! Does not that tell? I believe it does indeed!

"Why, Middleton, is this *you?*"

"Why, Johnson, is this *you?*"—broke simultaneously from the mouth of each of us, as a white-haired gentleman, rather lame from gout, and of very considerable dimensions round the waist, was introduced to me as my old college friend Johnson, whom I remembered as "a gallant, gay Lothario," shaking his ambrosial curls, and making the agreeable at balls and private dances in our young university days.

"But I declare you wear well though," said he. "See, here's Barnard, what do you say to him?"

Another old chum here presented himself, not gouty, white-haired and corpulent as Johnson was;

for age had taken another turn with him, and had left him thin and withered. He was not *solus* either, like Johnson and me; but was followed into the room by a young man whom he introduced to us as his son, who was reading law at the Temple.

Most genially did our hearts warm, and our memories open to the reminiscences which, all dinner time, and indeed, long afterwards, kept bubbling up in the minds of all of us. There was nothing said but "Don't you remember this?" and "Have you forgotten that?" In vain did the young Templar interpose with his modern university information, setting us right forsooth, and trying to convince us that there was never such a thing as dining at one o'clock on Sundays, to be ready for the afternoon service at St. Mary's at three, for that it began at two.

"We are talking of things that happened before you were born," said Seymour. "The afternoon service at the university church, was in our young time, at three o'clock; and the vice-chancellor had his Sunday-dinner at one, to be ready for it. And old J. B——, the senior bedell, was the time-keeper, and usually gave notice by observing that, 'after the next glass, Mr. Vice-chancellor, I think it will be time to go.'" Equally did we scout the intelligence he imparted of there being now no "St. Mary's hack," for that select preachers for the afternoon were chosen from the most gifted and popular divines, each of whom took his month in

the academical year, and that it would do our hearts good to hear some of them.

Let them be as excellent as they might, they did not belong to *our* young days. Old H——, dear old H——, who, for three guineas a sermon, preached one for every Master of Arts who could not, or would not, take his appointed turn at the University church, — he was the man we were rejoicing in the remembrance of.

"Do you recollect that crack discourse of his, Middleton," said Seymour, "about Adam?"

"To be sure," said I, "who could ever forget it? I see him now, with his own bland, peculiar smile, repeating that apostrophe 'Oh, Adam! what a vain subterfuge!'"

"And the old master of ——," said Johnson, "don't you see him too, sitting in the front row in the Golgotha?"

"The what?" interrupted Mrs. Seymour.

"It means the Throne," said young Barnard, "where the heads of colleges, the noblemen, doctors and professors sit, at the University church."

"Well, what of the old master?" said Mrs. Seymour.

"Only that whenever Mr. H—— got to the words '*let us then*,' in his discourse (and he always did get to them sooner or later)," said Johnson, "the Master of —— used to take up his cap as it lay on the cushion before him, as a preparation for moving off."

"But once when H—— was said to have got a new ending," said Barnard, "or at all events when the '*let us then*' was not forthcoming, how the old Master was puzzled, and kept taking up his cap, and looking about him, not knowing what was become of the usual symptom of a close."

"Ah, Middleton, don't you recollect our going to Barton feast,* and dancing without our coats?" said Johnson.

"Dancing without your coats!" exclaimed Mrs. Seymour, "why, what sort of ladies had you for partners?"

"No ladies at all," said he, "but good-natured country girls, small farmers' daughters and such like; and seeing that it was the fashion with some of their partners to dance without their coats, we were glad to follow their example as the weather was hot."

"You must remember," said I, "that in those days (forty years ago, I suppose) dancing was a different thing altogether from what it is now. We had no waltzing and polking, only plain, homely country dances, which, I confess, I did enjoy most amazingly, even in a country barn."

"One enjoyed every thing then," said Johnson with a sigh.

"And why not now?" said Seymour. "For

* The village fairs in Cambridgeshire are generally called feasts.

my part, I see no reason why a man may not always enjoy himself, while he is in health, and out of debt."

We most of us demurred a little to the unlimited sweep of capability for happiness which this observation comprized; and Mrs. Seymour having controverted it to the very borders of perfect good temper, withdrew a little discomposed.

Amidst many more reminiscences, some of a painful kind, involving to the query of "What's become of so and so?" the frequent reply of, "Dead! dead for years!" our evening passed away; during a great part of which Mrs. Seymour had kept up a long conversation in a subdued tone with young Barnard. What had been the subject of their discourse was soon disclosed after the departure of the guests; for scarcely waiting till the sound of their carriage wheels had died away, she addressed her husband with, "It's just as I expected, Seymour; Ernest will certainly be plucked after all."

"What nonsense you talk," said he, impatiently; "he cannot be plucked. You don't know what being plucked means."

"Does it not mean that he won't take an honour?"

"No, no," said he, "it means that a man gets no degree at all."

"Well, he won't take an honour then; and I always said he would not. Young Barnard says,

that no man has a chance of being among the first six wranglers who does not—"

"I never expected him to be among the first six," hastily interrupted Seymour; "if he is a wrangler at all, I shall be thankful. But he will get an honour somewhere, I don't doubt; and if he does not, where's the use of fretting?"

"Of course not," said she, lighting her candle with an angry jerk; "but it is not every body that has *your* happy way of tossing off their emotions without any trouble. Good night, Mr. Middleton;" and she extended her hand with a smile which struggled visibly, like the sun in a showery day, to get the ascendancy over some rising tears.

I am sure my countenance and voice did me injustice if there was not a testimony in them of deep sympathy with the trial with which her strong and ill-disciplined feelings were so needlessly assailing her.

"Ah, Middleton," said Seymour, as soon as the door closed upon her, "I think you have done well not to marry."

"Pooh, pooh," replied I, "you don't think any such thing."

He was silent a few moments, and then spoke again, half in jest, but with a sufficient shade of earnestness to give me an occasion for a word or two, which some secret emotions of my own prompted me to offer.

"You do not allow to feeling and imagination,"

said I, in reply to his representations of what he called the "fancies and nonsense of women," "you do not indeed, Seymour, and never did allow to the delicate and beautiful emotions which you dismiss as 'fancies and nonsense,' the purpose and scope they ought to have. Do you remember how often, with your hard, dry, mathematical driving after the solution of a problem, you used to bother me at college, when I wanted you to listen to my reading a poem of Scott's or Campbell's?"

"My mind is essentially averse to fancy," said he; "but I do not reckon myself deficient in feeling."

"Neither are you," I replied; "you would relieve distress, and do kind things, but then it must be in the shortest possible way — 'Here my good fellow,' or, 'Here, good woman,' you would say, 'here's half a crown for you,—now be off, and let's have no more of it.'"

"Well, and what more would you have," said he, laughing; "if it is not enough that one performs the plain, practical part of human sympathy, but that one must also *do* the sentimental, and sing or say something about 'binding up broken hearts,' 'strewing flowers,' and the rest of it, — I am not the man for that sort of thing, I confess."

"I don't think you are," I replied; "but, my dear fellow, there is a class of human beings in the world, and perhaps it may have fallen to your lot to be intimately allied with one of them, whose

extreme sensitiveness of feeling demands somewhat of tenderness and pity in dealing with it."

"I cannot think it right to encourage the sensitiveness of which you speak," he replied. "It appears better and wiser to aim at subduing it, by meeting it with the plain matter of fact and common sense of things."

"All that is very well," said I, "and for the most part I quite agree with you. But there is such a thing as being too practical, too hard, too much in the habit of resisting emotion. And when this habit is yielded to, it tends to generate a *rather* selfish and unfeeling character. I think there are men (for this sort of character seldom belongs to women) who have especial need to guard themselves on this side—family men particularly. A solitaire like myself, indeed, may do well, as Horace Walpole says, to 'bar and double bar every avenue to feeling,' but a man in your circumstances should not."

"I cannot conceive how it is that you have remained a solitaire, Middleton; I should have thought you the last man in the world to settle down into an old bachelor."

"It was the last thing I should have proposed to myself at one period of my life," said I.

He made a few observations upon this, accompanied by an allusion which it seemed ungracious, under the circumstance of our renewed friendship, and long acquaintance, to disregard. It was not,

however, till he had a second time uttered the name of Fanny Maitland, that I could summon courage to meet the awakened troop of long slumbering feelings associated with the remembrance of that once loved individual.

"It is a painful recollection to revive," said I, on his making a few inquiries on the subject; "but if it would interest you to hear how my engagement with Fanny was broken off, I will tell you. In fact, I have a deeper motive than the mere satisfying of your curiosity, or I could not revert to it. The fact is, I trace so much of poor Fanny's peculiar temperament in Mrs. Seymour's, that I wish to put you on your guard in dealing with it; for, though I have no wilful or conscious unkindness wherewith to reproach myself, I know by experience how bitterly we feel in after years every severe and unsympathizing word that may have escaped us, even when there was no way left but what must, from the nature of things, seem a hard and unfeeling one to act in."

"That is just what I tell Maria," said he— "'You positively drive me to be harsh with you,' I say, 'from the unreasonableness and folly of your surmises, and doubts, and needless apprehensions.'"

"Ah, my dear friend," said I, "if it should be your lot to lose her, the unreasonableness and folly will be forgotten, and her affectionate depth of feeling alone will be remembered and regretted."

"God forbid I should lose her!" said he. "With

all her faults, life would be a desolate wilderness to me without Maria."

I answered him with the well-known quotation,

> "Be to her faults a little blind,
> And to her virtues very kind."

"It is good counsel," said he, "I will try and follow it. But now"—and he drew nearer the fire, preparatory to my relating my reminiscences, with which I will begin another chapter.

CHAPTER III.

First Love and last.

"YOU had seen enough of Fanny Maitland, if I recollect right," said I, "to suppose her a girl whom any man might have hoped to be happy with in marriage?"

"I remember her as a charming, sprightly girl," said he, "living with her father, old Solicitor Maitland, in Lincoln's Inn Fields; the mother dead, and she an only daughter. I remember also your professing to study law at Lincoln's Inn, as I did, when we left college; but both of us passing the greater part of our time in making love to our respective fair ones. All at once you announced to me that your marriage was broken off, and that you were going as travelling tutor with Lord E— for two or three years; with which intelligence your worship departed, and it is only by incidental shreds and patches that I have heard any thing about you for very many years. I heard, indeed,

of poor Fanny's death some years since; but having lost sight of you, I had equally lost sight of her, whom I only knew through the circumstance of your taking me once or twice to drink tea at her father's house. Your whole history therefore, will be new to me from the time of your engagement being broken off."

"It will be new to you," said I, "from the time of its coming on, for I never spoke to you or to any one else, of the series of miseries with which, from its very commencement, it was attended."

"I was not unsuspicious of them," he replied, "for very soon after you acknowledged your engagement, I observed a change of manner in you, and a frequent dejection of spirits, which seemed to me quite inconsistent with the happiness I knew you anticipated under your new circumstances. For you used, you know, to speak of the prospect of a union with Fanny, as the all of earthly felicity you had to wait for."

"Neither did I exaggerate in so speaking; for I loved Fanny and should always have loved her, far more than I could easily express, if she would have permitted it; but she was of a nature that destroyed affection, viewing the sentiment in that exalted light in which alone I desired either to feel or to inspire it. But to begin at the beginning. Captivated far less by any personal attractions, than by the intelligence and vivacity of her mind, the depth and force of her understanding, and what I

conceived to be the strength of her judgment, and not doubting but that she would be speedily sought, and perhaps won, by some candidate for her hand, I did not take sufficient time to consider the matter before I made her a proposal of marriage."

"If you had taken twenty years, my dear fellow," said he, "it would have been all the same. You can never know what women are, nor any one else indeed, till you come to live with them."

"You cannot know what a woman is," said I, "whilst you are a supposed but an undeclared lover; but I believe after the avowal *is* made, and particularly if the engagement is likely to be a long one, it is no bad criterion of her temper and feelings. I had nothing to offer Fanny but myself at the time I first addressed her; for my father who was still living, had made it a point that I should choose and follow a profession, for at least three or four years, before he would agree to assist me in any matrimonial projects. He was a man of fortune, but he had other children besides me, and could not, in justice to them, make me independent during his life time. All this I distinctly laid before Fanny, and in the first instance, she received it as I expected she would, with perfect satisfaction. We were both of us young enough to wait a couple of years, and I did not doubt by that time, that I should be so far in the way to get on, that my father would consent to my marriage. I was never of that impetuous temperament which sees no such

thing as a future. Fanny, on the contrary, was a perfect child with respect to waiting for events. How well do I remember the first evening in which I discovered the strong features of impatience and ungoverned temper, which, for more than two years, embittered nearly the whole of my intercourse with her. With a hopeful futurity before us, I could have been happy to pass my evenings in her society, to read to her, to converse, to enjoy her enchanting musical powers, and to be at peace. Nothing could be more delightful than the first month of our engagement thus pursued. Her father was occupied in his office, almost from morning till night; and, when not so engaged, he was away at his clubs and his other amusements, so that it was impossible for us to have had more opportunity than we possessed, for enjoying each other's society; and we were, as I thought, mutually happy; though there was an occasional pettishness in her manner, which I was quite at a loss to understand; but which I did not care to run the hazard of aggravating by enquiries. I was sufficiently in love to be rather more than less captivated, by the whim and caprice which in its modified exhibitions, had often amused me in Fanny's *piquant* and original nature. It soon began, however, to assume something of a deeper, and harsher character; and on the evening to which I allude, she was so manifestly cross and out of temper in her manner towards me, that I was compelled to

close the book I was reading to her, and ask the reason for it.

" ' One gets tired,' said she, ' of reading for ever.'

" ' My dear love,' said I, affectionately caressing her, ' I only read because I thought you liked it.'

" ' Is it not sometimes because it is difficult for you to find anything to say to me; or, at least, any thing that I should care to hear?'

" If this had been playfully uttered, it would have passed with me for nothing; as she had a sly way of quizzing people to their faces, which might make them stare, but seldom made them angry; so irresistibly droll and diffusive was her gaiety in her happier hours."

" I remember it well," said Seymour. " In the little I saw of her, there was a novelty, a naïveté, a fund of clever fun about her, which seemed to clothe her with the very genius of mirth and good temper."

" It was what I conceived to be the sweetness of her nature, united to an uncommonly strong understanding, that so quickly and deeply made me her captive," I replied. " I could not believe that I was mistaken in my judgment of her. In regard to her remarkable good sense, I was certain I was not; for, in the short period that had elapsed since our intimacy, I found my own mind quickened and improved by the sparkling vivacity and acute penetration of her remarks upon things and people.

With respect to her temper indeed, I had, unhappily, been compelled occasionally to make a question, before the evening of which I speak.

" ' What does this mean, Fanny?' said I. *You*, of all people, are surely not going to exhibit the freaks and fancies of caprice.'

" ' I do not call it caprice,' said she, ' but proper self-respect, to be dissatisfied with indifference from those whose attentions and regard are one's right.'

" '*Indifference from those whose attentions and regard are one's right!* My love, you must interpret, if you please,' said I; ' for this passes my feeble ability to comprehend.'

" ' None are so dull as those who do not choose to understand,' she replied.

" I felt myself getting angry; for though I do not consider myself by any means an ill-tempered person, I am somewhat hasty and irritable, particularly when unjustly treated, as I had some reason to think myself in the present case.

" ' Perhaps by to-morrow, then,' said I, rising from my chair with an intention of going away, ' you may be better inclined to explain yourself, if indeed there is any thing to explain; and if all this mysterious conduct be not the result of temporary ill-humour.'

" I held out my hand; but instead of taking it, she turned away with great scorn. ' It is just as I supposed,' said she; ' I have loved you, Middleton,

you know how sincerely. I could not love indeed, by halves; I could not love as *you* do, if I would. I could not consent to drawl on an engagement, with a peradventure that it *may* end in marriage, or it may *not;* and if it does not, why there is no harm done.'

"Here then was the secret of her wrath. It was not enough that we were *bonâ fide* engaged, and that I meant to marry her in a couple of years. Because I was contented under this arrangement, because I acquiesced in it, and supposing the thing settled, did not for ever keep harping upon the all manner of impossible ways in which, to be sure, we might have talked about sooner accomplishing our marriage, her pride was offended, and after many faint flashes in the distance, the tempest burst forth."

"Well, I think," said Seymour, "I could make allowance for a strong feeling woman being a little hurt at your too serene and undisturbed acquiescence in the necessity of waiting. I know *I* was for making the shortest possible work of it with Maria. If there had been the calm contentment in postponing it, which seems to have been *your* mode of conducting the affair, I don't believe she would have had me at all. But you were never a man of impulse, Middleton; you had always a touch of the philosopher in your temperament."

"I suppose I have," said I: "and I also suppose that there *might* be, on my part, somewhat

too much of unperturbed assent to the waiting part of the matter, to comport with Fanny's ideas of what a lover ought to be. But things act according to their natures, and so do people, and so did I; for, instead of arguing the matter, or soothing her into a better temper, I yielded to the sense of self-respect, and of a feeling still more delicate and indefinable, which, unhappily for herself, she had severely wounded, — and rather abruptly wished her good night. I do not suppose that ever in my life I carried to my lonely apartment a heart so oppressed, so startled, so dissatisfied. Oh, Seymour, if women knew how inconceivably delicate is the link on which their estimation hangs in the judgment of an earnest, and perhaps a fastidious man, (for such, in respect to them, I believe I may deserve to be called) there would be nothing they would so carefully preserve intact as the dignity, the severe self-respect with which his imagination delights to invest them. Without being able exactly to say how or why, the image of Fanny, in the exalted superiority with which I had hitherto arrayed it, was damaged; she was not altogether the person I had supposed her to be. Still, as I grew more cool, I admitted blame to myself, in not being more considerate to her feelings in quitting her so abruptly. I determined, therefore, that I would call upon her the next day as soon as I had breakfasted, and make my peace. But there was no need for me to be forming purposes of this sort;

I was already anticipated by a note, which I found upon my breakfast table at eight o'clock the next morning. Every word is still fresh in my remembrance.

" 'I have been watching for the first dawn of day,' she wrote, 'to entreat of you to let me see you as soon as possible. You have not surely left me for ever! You could not be so cruel as to forsake me for a hasty ebullition of temper, the indulgence of which has made me as hateful to myself, as I feel—oh, how agonizingly feel—that I must be to you. Beloved Middleton, forgive me; and hasten, as soon as possible, to tell me that you do. I shall know no interval of peace till I have seen you again, and till you have called me once more your own FANNY."

" That's it exactly!" said Seymour; " plaguing one's heart out with their caprice, and then plaguing their own with remorse for what they have done. Well, you went of course?"

" Of course I did; and was melted and subdued in a moment. How was it possible, indeed, that I should be otherwise, when the impassioned creature met me, and almost before the servant had closed the door upon us, threw herself into my extended arms, and sobbed in speechless emotion on my shoulder! I attempted to soothe her, but for a long time unavailingly; 'she had degraded herself in my estimation,' she said, 'and I should never feel towards her as I had done.'"

"Strange, to the last degree, was the construction of this singular woman's mind! Nothing escaped the acuteness, the delicacy of her penetration, no, not even her own faults, and their consequences; and, as a judge in matters of conduct and of conscience, I would have selected her, beyond any one I ever knew — always provided, they were matters in which her own feelings and passions had no interest. When once these were excited, she was no longer the exalted Fanny whom I had enshrined as the *beau ideal* of feminine attraction, but the enslaved victim of her will and wishes, and the sport of a very violent temper, in a way that was too pitiable, not to be dangerously near becoming contemptible.

"'And you really could vex your little perverse heart with supposing that I was gone for ever! You really pretend to look me in the face (and I raised the drooping head, and elicited a faint smile through the tears that had so swollen and disfigured the countenance, that it was scarcely recognizable for Fanny's), you can look at me and say in earnest, that you believed I should never come and see you again? My dear girl, how *can* you run into such extremes and exaggerations? how *can* you suffer yourself to be so deserted by common sense and reason?'

"'I don't know that I expected I should hear nothing more of you,' she replied; 'on the contrary, I made no doubt I should have a letter, —

perhaps before the day ended. I had, indeed, written one for you, in my own mind, during my sleepless night.'

"'Your sleepless night!'

"'Yes;—who could think of sleep, with such a mind as I took to my pillow! But *you* slept, I dare say. Now, I'll tell you, Middleton, just how it was with both of us, after you went off so hastily. The door had not closed upon you, when I, for my part, felt inclined to run and call to you to return. But I *did* keep that down. He will surely come back, said my fond, anticipating heart; and I waited, and listened, and looked at the clock, and wondered if it was too late, and walked up and down the room, till my father's well-known knock, and the striking of twelve, made me sure it was all over for that night; and then I went upstairs and sat down to weep, and reproach, and abuse myself, till I was almost mad. 'To act in this way to such a man as that!' I said to myself,—'a man so cold, so severe in his notions of female conduct!'

"Cold and severe! Is it so, Fanny?' I was not cold then, I know; but the warmth of my endearments did not obscure my clear assent to the general truth of her words.—'I was not so cold and severe it seems as to run away from you *quite*, as you were pleased to anticipate. You did, however, give me credit for sending a letter explanatory of my withdrawal?'

" ' Yes—I will trace the process I expected,' said she. ' You went away, you know, dissatisfied,—perhaps, Middleton, I should use a stronger term —I *did* use it to myself last night. ' You have done it now,' I said; ' fool—fool that you are, you have disgusted him. He is gone home with another picture of you in his fancy than he ever saw before ;—not Fanny as she ought to be, and as she would be if she could govern herself, but Fanny ill-tempered, unjust, unreasonable, — Fanny, in short, despicable, even to herself. He is too calm to sympathize with the trials I experience from the strength of my will,—my undisciplined temper,—my exacting self-love ; and he will write to say so. I see the letter before me ;— I can go over, word by word, its imperturbable good sense—'

" ' And good feeling, too,' said I; ' I hope you did not forget to put that in, under some form or another ; for I think it would be needed, in behalf of the man who could break off the solemn engagement under which I consider myself bound to you, at the first glimpse of unreasonableness and sharp temper I may meet with. My dear love, how can you yield to such preposterous apprehensions ! What could your opinion of me be, to expect that I should be guilty of such unworthy conduct ? But you did not — you could not really think it : you only gave the reins to your excited imagination, and were led you knew not whither. Oh, Fanny, what shipwreck are you making by indulging this

tendency to extreme and unchastened views of things! You, too, that know so much better! Is it possible, my love, that you do not see where you diverge from all rule of right, and common sense, in yielding to the dominion of the inferior part of your nature?'

"'No, it is not possible but I should,' she replied with quickness;—'nobody sees more clearly than I do the strong defects of my character, and nobody laments them more deeply; but you do not know how cruelly my childhood and youth were neglected. My mother died when I was in my infancy, and her sister, my aunt (who kept my father's house till she married, when I was about nineteen), was of all people the most improper to have the charge of a high-spirited child like me, indulging me as she did in everything I wished for. My governess was a pompous goose, who, being conscious that I easily fathomed her shallow acquirements, made it her business to keep her situation by doing any thing, and every thing that was most likely to make her agreeable to me. I might be said, in short, to rule the house, inasmuch as with my whims and drolleries, I contrived to rule my father. All he wants, good soul, is, as you know, to be amused when he is at home; and I could always manage, on the whole, to do that.'

"'But you don't manage to be happy yourself, Fanny, I doubt?'

"'No, I fail there;' she replied with mournful

earnestness. 'But I know the way, if—*if*—I could but calmly, quietly walk in it—as *you* do, for instance.'

"'You mistake, Fanny,' said I, 'when you talk of my calmness and quietness. I love peace dearly, and would buy it at any price consistent with duty;—but I am naturally of much too hasty a temper, to be happy without many severe struggles."

"'I have never seen you hasty,' said she.

"'I would not let you, my dearest,' said I; 'if I could possibly help it.'

"'Ah!' said she, 'that's the secret of your self-command!—You are too proud to betray any weakness.'

"I laughed. 'Is it a bad feeling,' said I, 'that prompts us to take care and not expose ourselves?'

"I spoke unconscious of the quick application which she would make of my words; but the deep sigh with which, after a few moments' silence, she replied, '*I* have no proper pride, I doubt;' sufficiently testified to the wound I had most unintentionally inflicted on her feelings.

"'You have the materials in your nature for every thing that is proper, Fanny,' said I; 'but after what you have told me just now, respecting your indulged childhood and youth, I can quite understand how it is that you have run to waste so grievously.'

"She looked grave,—not to say resentful at this.—I declare to you, Seymour, that from this period,

and beginning at it, my whole intercourse with her was like that of a man who is dancing upon wires. There was no saying when, where, and how he might tumble down, and do mischief. Though she would open her mind in the most ingenuous and simple manner, so that you would think you had a perfect child to lead and guide,—yet, if you happened to act upon the ground she had, as you thought, prepared for you, it was more than probable that you would give the most dire offence."

"She was like Mrs. Ranby in Cœlebs," said Seymour; who would talk by the hour, of her innate corruptions and sin; but as soon as her husband joined with her in lamenting them, would look at him angrily and reply, 'I don't know what you mean, Mr. Ranby, by supposing me to be so bad; I am not aware of giving you any cause for thinking so.'"

"It was something like that, most certainly," said I. "But not to dwell on this part of my story, I may shortly say, that from that time, my estimation of Fanny Maitland, and my sentiments for her, had received a shock, the effects of which a less sensitive person than myself, might possibly have surmounted; but which, I candidly confess, I could not. Still, I held myself bound to fulfil my engagement to her; but it was somewhat in the light of a sacrifice, that I contemplated doing so. It was not in my nature to anticipate happiness on any of the low grounds which many men do.

My ideas of women were of a very high order, and not to have been able to unite the most perfect esteem and confidence to that of passion, in the feelings I hoped to entertain for the wife of my bosom, was a source of bitter disappointment to me. Fanny was unquestionably, in many important respects, a person to be both esteemed and loved; but it was, as I have said, when her nature was entirely free from interest and excitement. The constant indulgence which her neglected education had allowed to her feelings, and the habit in which she had been nursed of finding submission to her will, in every person and thing connected with her, had nourished into dominion some very strong and impracticable points of her nature, and such as totally unfitted her for encountering that kind of passive, but inflexible opposition, which the force of circumstances if nothing else, does, happily for us all, occasionally interpose between our wishes and their fulfilment. She would say sometimes, when I took the opportunity of a calm interval to offer her some counsel, — 'that she did not know what patience meant.' One might have taken Fanny as a study of human nature, or as a subject for a poem, or a novel; but this kind of show subjects does not suit the exigencies of practical life."

"That is just what I tell Maria. 'Come down to the practical part of things,' I say; 'just give me the common sense of the matter.'"

"The plain and practical is the stuff to last for daily consumption," said I,—"But still, since time

has softened down the contemplation of her, and more particularly, since my poor Fanny has been gone, I cannot exonerate myself as much as I could wish, from the charge she so often threw out against me, of being 'a cold,—a hard man towards her.' I was not this in a reasonable view of the matter; but to one of her violent and impassioned temperament, I have no doubt but that I must often have seemed so. The truth is, I was not the proper person for her;—in fact, I don't know where such a one could have been found. But I must be brief. This opening up of so many long closed cells of memory, is somewhat too painful to be long protracted. We went on thus for nearly two years; quarrelling and making up after a fashion that she seemed to revel in;—but which was, of all things, the most insufferable to me. She could not live without excitement;—I never liked it. A scene was to her, a luxury;—to me, it was a humiliation. Tremendous therefore, was the slaughter which her vehement and restless spirit continually made of my happiness. I prepared myself, in a word, to be a victim. I had a forlorn hope indeed, that in the course of time, her excellent sense, and my increased influence as a husband, together with the prospect perhaps, of newer and softer ties, would effect some subjugation of her nature; but it was a fearful peradventure on which to lean; and assuredly, in the contemplation of my approaching nuptials, I was anything but happy.

"We were within three months of our union,

when, little as I supposed that I had yet more to know of Fanny's ungoverned and violent spirit, a circumstance occurred, that served to open up a new, and still more direful chapter in our melancholy story.

" She had, by her father's wish, invited a young cousin to come and make her a visit, who was to remain with her till her marriage, and if the old gentleman liked her society, was to continue afterwards with him as his housekeeper in Fanny's place. I observed a great unwillingness in Fanny to comply with her father's wishes in this respect; and more than once, she complained to me on the subject, in what seemed a very ungracious and unreasonable way; as nothing appeared to me more proper, than that the old man should supply his daughter's company by that of his niece, provided he chose to do so.

" It was not long however, before the true cause of this distaste to the company of Miss Fielding was disclosed to me. Nobody indeed had long to wait, or much manœuvering to practise, in order to know what Fanny was about. Many a child of ten or twelve years old, I used to tell her, would be much more adroit in keeping their own counsel than she was.

" Miss Fielding came; and for the first week or so, after her arrival, we kept pretty clear of storms; —our time being too much occupied with showing her some of the sights of the metropolis, to leave

much room for altercation. She was a very lovely and interesting young woman. Quiet and dignified in manners, and well-informed in mind, she presented one of the best specimens of English girls; and had I been free, I think it highly probable that I might have been seriously attracted by her gentle and graceful demeanour, and the good sense of her conversation. But I could not more sedulously have avoided the indulgence of a thought of this kind, had I been already Fanny's husband. My attentions towards her, were nothing more than propriety required from any gentleman into whose society she was so frequently thrown, and to whom so near a relation was about to be married. I had not yet seen Fanny under the excitement of jealousy. Little did I conceive then, of the still further developement of the worst side of her nature, which I was yet to be presented with.

"An evening of gloom and silence on her side, and of such vexed and bewildered discourse on Miss Fielding's, as sufficiently testified that she also was aware of something having gone wrong, sent me home very miserable; but I was used to be miserable, and did not now so much care about it; besides, I made allowance for some pettishness on the evening in question; inasmuch as I had endeavoured to dissipate some of my melancholy, by asking Sophia Fielding to play and sing, which she did very sweetly. I saw by Fanny's countenance that this was a great offence; and assuredly, if she

would have been good tempered and sociable, I should not have thus seemed to shut her out from my attentions. But the truth was, I did not know what the gathering clouds might produce; and bad as our jangling scenes were when we had them to ourselves, they would have been a thousand fold worse before a spectator. As yet, Miss Fielding had never made a third on these occasions. I dreaded the possibility of her being included in the drama that night; for something fearful I saw was at hand; some avalanche was about to burst forth I felt assured, though in what form I could not possibly conceive. As a shield, therefore, for Miss Fielding as well as myself, I contrived to place her at the pianoforte. Fanny, in the meantime, had thrown herself into an arm chair by the fire, from which position I could feel, rather than see, that she was darting angry glances at me. I knew that I ought to speak to her, yet I positively recoiled from going near to address her. I understood her so well, that, under circumstances like the present, a feeling akin to the instinct which keeps a man from exasperating an infuriated animal, usually served to make me silent and wary how I approached her. I am aware that this sort of behaviour on my part must have been very trying to her. But what could I do? Our natures were essentially dissimilar, and who can alter the ground of nature? She had lost my esteem, and also my confidence,—speaking of confidence as that assured feeling of

being respected and trusted, which alone can impart security and duration to any attachment. She had shown me, over and over again, by her captious mode of treating me, her exacting self-love, and the small occasions on which she would take offence, that she had no proper confidence in my affection for her; and, in truth, she had done so much to trifle with and undermine it, that it was, unhappily, greatly shaken. But a link, and that a strong one, yet bound me to her; and that was, the deep consciousness that the unfortunate girl (unfortunate alas! in attaching herself to one so totally unfit for her) did passionately love me. Caprice, and whim, and coquetry, ten thousand women might, safely enough for their own peace, indulge themselves in. Light as bubbles in the air, their prepossessions, such as they are, come and go, and nobody knows or cares what becomes of them. But it was not so with Fanny. It was no assumed whim, no sham displeasure, put on for the purpose of ascertaining her power over a lover's heart, that she ever adopted. She was a creature wholly devoid of artifice. She could neither have formed a plan, nor carried one into execution, to win an empire. Alas, no! her wearying suspicions, her painful resentments, and all the harassing emotions by which she made herself and me so wretched, were the genuine and irrepressible workings of a spirit intense and restless in its demands for happiness, and resisting with imperious anger whatever threat-

ened to oppose the extravagance of its claims. She would have had me, not merely the lover, but the vehemently impassioned, the adoring lover. It was not enough that I had once sincerely laid myself and my prospects at her feet, I must do it every day, and all day long; and truly did I express the case, when I once said to her in a moment of great indignation, 'It does not suffice, Fanny, if I lie down and let you trample upon me; but I must be passive, whilst you stab me with a thousand wounds into the bargain.' "

" Your story will do me good, Middleton," said Seymour. " It will serve to content me with my lot, if indeed I wanted such a memento, but I do not; I am very well satisfied. But go on. I am anxious to hear how you got your dismissal; for it came from the lady of course?"

" Yes, it came from her, certainly; but I fear it was given with no conception of its being so quickly and satisfactorily received. Ah, that is the painful part of it. But I must not revert to that. Let us get on.

" Sophia, naturally supposing that her presence could be dispensed with, made some pretext for leaving the room; much more perhaps to Fanny's satisfaction than mine, for I utterly revolted from these purposeless, puerile wranglings. On this occasion, however, we had neither discussion nor dispute, for she was scornfully silent; and finding I could get nothing from her but disdainful monosyllables, I retired, about as gloomy as herself.

"As usual, I received a note the next morning, expressing a wish to see me '*immediately;*' a request with which I was in no humour to comply. The fact is, I was both tired and ashamed of waiting upon the fluctuations of her stormy and uncertain feelings; and I determined on this day, for the first time, to show her that she was not to expect a subservience to her will, which I began to feel so degrading to me. I took no notice of her summons, therefore, till the evening, when I went at the usual hour. I found only Miss Fielding in the drawing-room, but Fanny was up stairs, she said, and would be down directly. 'I am going to call upon a friend,' she continued; 'so that I shall scarcely see you again this evening;' and she extended her hand as she wished me good night, and was about to leave the room. I had but that moment taken it in the most simple and common place way possible, as Fanny entered; at sight of whom Sophia, with visible confusion, hastily withdrew her hand.

"'O, upon my word, Miss Fielding and Mr. Middleton! I am afraid I have arrived a little too soon,' with a sarcastic smile, was Fanny's exclamation. Miss Fielding, happily, could make off, which she instantly did, as if intuitively knowing it was the best thing she could do; but I must stay and brace myself for a whirlwind, though whence it arose I was wholly ignorant; except, indeed, that Miss Fielding's evident embarrassment, and sudden withdrawal of her hand at Fanny's entrance, did

flash a suspicion in my mind, that something of jealousy had arisen in the mind of my poor unhappy girl towards her cousin. It seemed too preposterous a surmise, however, even for Fanny's morbid imagination to originate; and amidst all the possible causes for her displeasure which I might have suggested to myself, this was one which my conscience could not, for a moment, allow me to recognize as a just one.

"'You received my note, I suppose?' was her first address to me.

"'Yes, I did; but I really could not come till I had braced myself for some very serious conversation with you, Fanny. This indeed, I have had many times before, but not as I mean to have it now. I must tell you at once then, that you are treating me in a way which I really feel despicable to myself for enduring as I have done; but which, I do most distinctly and decidedly tell you, that I will endure no longer.'

"'In plain English then, you are come I suppose, to tell me that you wish to break off our engagement,' she replied with an ironical smile.

"'No, Fanny, I do not come to tell you this; I am willing to fulfil it;—but this I do tell you, that you must be greatly more cautious than you are, if you wish to avoid making me very miserable in the prospect of its being fulfilled. For what can I anticipate but misery in a union with a person whose fitful and ungoverned caprices afford me no scope to

build any prospect upon, but that too well grounded one of being a harassed, disappointed, wretched man? I want to respect you if I can; but when you show me, by your indulgence to every impulse of a suspicious and morbid imagination, that you do not care to respect yourself, how can I do otherwise than,'—I paused, for I could not well add the words which suggested themselves. But she took them up;—

"'Than despise me, I suppose, you would say.'

"'I should be grieved to say so harsh a thing,' I replied.

"'You may as well say it as feel it,' said she; 'and, that you do feel it, has long been evident to me; but never so clearly so, as within the last fortnight, when your affections, such as they are (cold and impassive, heaven knows, as Greenland ice!) but still, *such* as they are' (oh how bitterly she spoke those words) 'are given to another.'

"'What is it you mean?' I asked.

"'I mean that you love, with such love as you are capable of, Sophia Fielding.'

"'It's false,' said I, 'and you know it to be so.'

"'Well, well,' she quickly replied, 'you have not told her so, I dare say. But Middleton, do you think I do not understand the language of eyes? Do you think I do not also know right well, the sort of cold, calculating composition of pride and reserve, that your chivalrous knight-errantry would like to fall down and worship; and

is not Sophia just that piece of propriety which would realize your conceptions of female excellence? I expected it before she came; and to guard myself against it I would have prevented her coming.—And why? Idiot that I am, why should I have cared to secure the continuance of a forced regard, a mere sacrifice to honour and duty; for that would be your secret estimate of a marriage with me, whom you all but acknowledge that you despise. And you might despise me, sir, and ought to do so, if I took you on these paltry terms. No, no, go your way, with your liberty in your hand.'

"O Seymour, it was a desperate card for herself that she was now playing! A man in love, in the common acceptation of the term, might have borne with patience this burst of fierce resentment; but it was always from higher ground, that I had elicited my attachment. I had many times seen that attachment woefully jarred and desecrated, by the violence of Fanny's temperament; but never till now, had I beheld it positively dashed to atoms, by the outrageous force of her blind and preposterous passions.

"'I shall go my way for the present,' said I, 'most certainly. Whether, as you are pleased to express it, '*with my liberty in my hand*' or not, depends upon the view you yourself may take of marriage with a man, who honestly confesses to you, that your conduct this evening, in openly avowing a jealousy which you might be ashamed to allow yourself to feel, groundless as common sense would

tell you that it is, and also in indulging in the bitter, the causeless contumely with which you have assailed him, does so degrade you in his eyes, that he can do little else than sigh in the prospect of passing his life with you.'

"I then hastily withdrew, too indignant and insulted to care about the consequences that might follow this declaration.'

"I think you were right," said Seymour. "But the poor girl! she did not intend or expect you to believe her, you know."

"I suppose not; even though she followed up her renunciation by a note of brief and indignant dismissal, before noon on the following day; accompanying it with a troop of books, and a curious *melange* of rings, brooches, and other trifles, with which, from time to time, I had presented her."

"Her note ran thus;—'I beg most distinctly to confirm the renunciation of your hand which I last night made. I am very contemptible to you, sir, no doubt; but I might be still more so; for I might cling to the prospect of being your wife; I might be poor enough to take just as much, or as little, of your affection, as you could spare from the demands of your own intense self-love. God be praised, that I am not thus abject! but that I do possess the self-respect and the propriety of thinking, which enables me to avail myself most thankfully of the opportunity now afforded me, of bidding you a lasting farewell!'

"It was not then, Seymour, that I felt the full

force, and that I saw the whole bearings of this rupture between Fanny and me. I will be candid, though in being so, I must condemn myself for selfishness. I felt in reading this note only one delightful sensation; it was that of *liberty*. I do not suppose that I had hitherto permitted myself to indulge to its full extent, the oppressive sense of thraldom which had embittered the greater part of my engagement. In fact, the sentiments of honour which it had been my pride to cultivate, forbade my doing so. Thus suddenly and unexpectedly, and on the very verge of an irrevocable doom, to find myself released, was therefore, only too satisfactory to me: and without making any reply to her note, I silently acquiesced in it. But that this was a base, an ignoble satisfaction, I can now most readily, most penitentially confess. However, it has been atoned for, by the sacrifice of all those dear, domestic influences which no one more ardently than myself once anticipated. It was eventually good for me; and I trust it might be so for Fanny—I have that hope; though it was through years of strange eccentricities and tremendous conflicts, that the poor impetuous girl obtained a harbour of rest. She does rest though—I can believe *that!*" A few moments of struggle with my emotions enabled me to proceed.

"I pass over the immediate consequences of this event. They were such as might have been expected; comprising an angry communication from

her father, in reply to a note in which I informed him of Fanny's renunciation of me, and took leave of him; and scornful glances from such of her acquaintance as casually encountered me. I was so perfectly acquitted by my conscience, from deserving to be thus scouted, that I did not take any pains to refute the various misrepresentations which I was well aware had gone forth on the subject. My greatest difficulty arose from Fanny herself, who, as her indignation subsided, and her good sense returned, would, I felt persuaded, mourn over the ravages of the tempest she had raised; and, according to the tenacity wherewith the human heart clings to the idea of being beloved, would still delude herself with a hope that my affection might be recovered, and restored to her. I dreaded this; I trembled under the too great probability of receiving one of the old notes of summons to her presence. It was true, that I should not obey such a requirement. That was clear as the sun at noonday. I do suppose, that, contemplating as I did, the escape I had experienced, I should, as a preferable alternative, almost have consented to die. But—but—there was something within me, something of a solemn and holy kind, that was dissatisfied with this aversion from her presence. O Seymour, what a divine thing is love, even in its most wild and unchastened state! And this poor girl, through all the imperfection and turbulence of her nature, did truly love me. And to have to reject,

to set at nought her passion!—I should do it, that was certain, for I had the stronger interest to guard, of my own comfort and peace; but I could not do it unblushing and unscathed. Ah no! be the faults of man or woman what they may, there is something in their giving their all of affection, hope, trust, and every beautiful feeling of the soul, there is something, I say, in this surrender, which must not be scorned nor roughly handled. 'Her sins which are many are forgiven her; for she hath loved much;' is a testimony of the most profound and touching character, to the sanctity which God himself attaches to the fond devotion of a loving heart.

"These, however, were after thoughts and feelings. One only, of a far different, and of a painfully sordid kind, engrossed me when the expected note came;—which it did at the lapse of about a fortnight from the rupture of our connection. It contained only these words:—'I am greatly distressed under a consciousness that my father and others also, judge you unjustly. A few minutes' conference with you would greatly relieve my mind. May I not hope to see you this evening for half an hour? when I can make it very clear, that none of the reproaches which have been heaped upon you, result from any misrepresentation of your conduct that have been made by Fanny.'

"A—a—h!" said Seymour, with a groan half jest, half earnest, "that your clear good sense, poor

Fanny, should not have told you that the game was up, and that such a step as this only settled it more irretrievably! But these poor women!—eagle-eyed in detecting the arrival of Cupid at their court, yet blind as bats to his departure!"

"Once there," said I, "they never believe that he can depart; and hence, though quick enough to captivate, they too often forget that it is the retaining of their conquest that is the main point and the chief difficulty. There is something in the nature of man,—of a refined and educated man more particularly,—which requires extreme delicacy of feeling on the part of a woman, to manage advantageously."

"There certainly is," said Seymour, "a remarkable perverseness in the mind of most men on the subject of love. Perhaps it consists in this—that whatever the strength of the passion they feel (and it may be very great, and perhaps increased in power by meeting with an avowed return), yet it may be doubted whether a woman does not almost always lose something on the side of a man's respect, when she acknowledges to him the full extent of her attachment. He is all professed rapture and gratitude at the charming avowal;—nay, he actually believes that he experiences the delight he expresses;—but a feeling too subtle and delicate to be defined, makes him conscious that something is thereby removed from the ideal beauty of his beloved; and something moreover, that was neces-

sary to the complete grace and dignity with which his imagination had enveloped her; and it was on this side, I suspect, that your poor Fanny failed; for you were always a bit of a *preux chevalier*, I think, Middleton, and should have gone a courting in the days when it was thought a great boon if at the end of seven years a lover was permitted to touch the tip of his mistress's little finger."

"I was certainly never the man adapted for Fanny," said I; "that admits of no doubt;—yet how passionately was I smitten with her in the first instance! This is just the woman for me, I thought. Her clear good sense and vigorous penetration, her sprightly energy, and active doings, will delightfully counteract my indolent and, as I am too well aware, somewhat selfish propensities. The mainspring of temper—that foundation of all life's mechanism—I unhappily forgot;—and to find her a victim,—a thing to be sported with, here!—it did degrade her, cent. per cent. I candidly confess, in my estimation."

"And when once a woman has sunk in her lover's affection and respect," said Seymour, "there is nothing left for her but silence and retirement, as far as relates to *him*. Whatever she does, let her never by word or deed approach *him* any more."

"I am afraid," said I, "that there is a sad and cruel reality in that hateful maxim of Rochefoucault's, wherein he says, '*we are much nearer*

loving those who hate us, than those who love us more than we like;' and that I was only too sensible of its truth, in reading Fanny's note. It is 'a plain unvarnished tale,' you see, Seymour, that I am telling."

"You cannot direct it to a more suitable hearer," he replied, "for I hate the drapery and costume which seeks to trick out details in order to make them look pretty. Let me see things as they are, —that is my motto."

"I plead guilty then," said I, "to the selfishness of seeing only one thing for me to do, on the receipt of Fanny's note; and that was, to avoid complying with the wish it expressed. In point of fact, it was impossible that I should do so, unless I had intended to renew our engagement; and on that point I was fixed as a rock. She, of course, did not suspect the real nature of my feelings, for she lived in a dream; and had her sensibilities been less acute, so that she could have patiently borne the awakening from her visions, and the having to endure that contact with the real, and often the disagreeably real, which the current of human life so frequently occasions,—all would have been well. But this she could not do. Every obstacle must be removed, and the path to her point, whatever it might be, — must be made smooth and pleasant directly;—and no rest had she till, right or wrong, she had done her utmost to make it so.

In the present case, I felt certain that the workings of her mind had all pointed one way; and that she had seen nothing before her but the complete reconciliation which she desired. It was but necessary for us to meet, she thought, and all would be forgiven and forgotten. The plain, intelligible fact, that *I* could not be anxious for the renewal of our engagement, or I should not have silently acquiesced in its being broken off, she totally overlooked; though, of all the materials with which her fancy had to operate, *my* feelings in the case were the most important for her to ascertain. It was quite clear then that I must be explicit. But what a position to be placed in! I profess to you, Seymour, that greatly as I shrank from the painful task it imposed upon me, it was less on my own account than on hers. For I could anticipate what such a blow must be to such a person;—the shame! the degradation! the disappointment! I felt it all for her: but I was in a region of clear judging and prompt acting, which admitted of no delusion; a region, moreover, in which I saw it to be my duty to assist Fanny to take her place;—a sorrowful, but, as I hoped, a salutary one. She must not be deceived! I said to myself; her eyes must be opened to the truth, however agonizing the wounds which the sight of it may inflict. To say what I had to say in the shortest compass, was my great desire. It was only these few lines, therefore, which I transmitted to her:—

"'It is impossible for me to come to you, inasmuch as by doing so I must necessarily express feelings that would only give you pain. With respect to the unfavourable impressions of my conduct which your father or any one else may entertain, my conscience acquitting me of deserving them, I cannot be solicitous about their removal. When I first sought your hand in marriage, it was with the most sincere and hopeful expectations of our being mutually happy; for I esteemed you, Fanny, as much as I loved you. That you have for a long time trifled with my feelings by causeless resentments, and a series of captious and unworthy treatment, only too well calculated to shake my regard,—you do not require me to tell you. It pains me to have to add,—but inflexible duty requires it of me,—that under the consciousness that we are totally unsuitable for each other, I can only consider it as a wise measure on your part, and one in which I entirely acquiesce, which has sundered our engagement. I do not expect that you will condescend to accept it; but nevertheless, I can most truly assure you, that it is with a sentiment of the deepest interest and good will, that I shall ever remain your friend and well-wisher.'

"This decisive step taken, I had now only to proceed to another, respecting which I had been ruminating ever since we parted. This was, to give my final consent to a proposal which had been made me of accompanying young Lord E—— as

travelling tutor, for two or three years. My father, who was not sorry to hear of my marriage being broken off, strongly advised this measure; which, under existing circumstances, seemed indeed to be the best thing I could do. You know all about my sudden departure from England, and my return home at my father's death, about three years after the period of which I speak."

"Yes; but I never rightly knew what became of you when you retired to take possession of your paternal estate in the north," said Seymour.

"I resided there but a year or two, and then went abroad again, my mind being too unsettled for any thing like happiness. For, though there was not much on the side of passion to be wounded by the loss of Fanny, I had a good deal of acute sensitiveness on the side of my conscience, which was disturbed by a constant thorn. The conviction of having been the cause to her of severe suffering, continually pursued me like a spectre. I would have given the world to know that she had recovered her peace. I perfectly languished to hear something about her, but I dared not make any enquiries, lest I should be suspected of some desire to renew our acquaintance; and, not only did I renounce marriage as it respected her, but as it respected the whole sex. If a woman of Fanny's superior understanding, I thought, was found upon trial to be filled with the petulant and wayward fancies of a child, where could I hope to meet with

the wisdom and solidity which my turn of mind demanded as essential in the woman with whom I was to pass my life? Thus reasoning, I had given up all ideas of marriage by the time I was five and thirty; and had set myself to a study both of men and books, which was always highly congenial to my nature. I passed the chief part of my time abroad, till I was near forty, when the death of an only brother required my return home. I had still two sisters left, both of whom had been married some years, but somewhat indifferently. My poor brother's affairs also were entangled in a maze of confusion; so that for a year or so after I came home, I had more than enough to do in setting things to rights for my relations."

"And did you hear no more of Fanny?" enquired Seymour.

"Yes; some intelligence respecting her fell in my way in a most unexpected manner. I had been painfully startled by seeing her name amongst the deaths in the newspaper: and had known, in consequence of it, an accession of melancholy which made me so restless and miserable that I endeavoured to dissipate it by spending a month at Brighton. While I was one day sauntering on the pier, I passed a lady, accompanied by three or four children, whose face recalled some bygone remembrances. She was evidently also struck in the same way at sight of mine; and both of us at the same moment stopped, while the name of Miss

Fielding broke from my lips, and that of Mr. Middleton from hers.

"Perceiving, after the first exchange of salutations, that I longed to enter into conversation with her, she spoke to a nursemaid who was with her, to take the children on a further walk, whilst we seated ourselves on one of the benches of the pier."

"'I call you Miss Fielding, for want of knowing the right appellation,' said I.

"'My name is Mowbray,' she replied; 'and, as you may perceive by my little retinue, it is some years since I lost the name of Fielding.'

"'This black dress of yours,'—said I, sighing heavily.

"'You know its cause, no doubt,' she observed.

"I bent an acknowledgment. Such a rush of buried memories came over my mind, that I could not for a few moments do more. At length she spoke.

"'There is nothing to lament,' she observed, 'in the departure of dear Fanny. She was inexpressibly happy in the thought of it. As Fontenelle said of Malebranche, that he was '*a calm spectator of his own death*,'*—so I am sure it might be said that she was of her's.'

"'It is a most unspeakable satisfaction to me,' said I, 'to hear that. I should vainly endeavour to

* Fontenelle's Eloge de Malebranche.

describe to you, Mrs. Mowbray, the festering anguish, the insuperable obstacle to all permanent peace, which the idea of having caused the devastation of her happiness has occasioned me.'

"'She *was* happy,' she replied, 'at the last; by which I mean, that when reduced by illness to a necessity for being quiet, she gradually learned to 'commune with her own heart and be still.' She turned then, where she had never before really gone, for a joy that none could take away from her, and she found it. But years of tumult and error preceded this blissful result. If I were to speak of her mistakes, her eccentricities, and all her various doings and misdoings in detail, I should never have done.'

"'I could listen,' said I, 'far more willingly than perhaps you would speak of all that relates to Fanny;' and I poured forth many of the wishes to hear of this and that respecting her, which, for many a long year, had been pent up within my own breast. The most prominent of these queries was, as you will readily suppose, as to the way in which she had borne the dissolution of our engagement.

"For some little time a visible unwillingness to give me pain restrained Mrs. Mowbray's communications on this point; but gradually I drew from her a statement, which I may condense now, into a briefer narrative than I was then satisfied with.

"I already knew that what Mrs. Mowbray called

'a grievous mistake,' but which might better be termed the frantic impulse of jealousy, had been the real ground for Fanny's anger. No sooner, therefore, was this 'mistake' cleared up, by the simple truth and good sense of her cousin's representations, than she was overwhelmed with remorse and misery for what she had done, and set herself to devising some plan for remedying it. I could infer from Mrs. Mowbray's manner in relating this, that she had herself disapproved of her indulging any wishes of this sort. 'From what I knew of poor Fanny's strong and undisciplined nature from her childhood,' said she, 'and the imperious way in which she had been always accustomed to assert and obtain her own will, I confess I thought it quite a problem whether she would get safely through the trials of temper which would probably fall to her lot on the subject of love and marriage. I had not seen you together six times before I believed, that if she had searched the world for a person wholly unfitted to bear with her eccentricities of mind and feeling, she had found that person in you.'

"'It was exactly so,' said I; 'but neither of us discovered this truth till it was, unhappily, too late. Yet, I was certainly very much in love with her in the first instance.'

"'Few persons have been more ardently beloved than Fanny,' she replied; 'for, when in high spirits and good temper, she was perfectly irre-

sistible. These, however, are often, you know, but holiday feelings; and poor Fanny, like many more, had nothing ready in the shape of patience and submission, wherewith to encounter the dull re-action which is sure to succeed to holiday feelings. She never could endure what, perhaps, you have a good deal of zest for, and that is, the quiet, unexcited routine of domestic life. The whirlwind and storm of the spiritual and invisible world, seemed her only congenial elements. Poor soul, she had enough of them!'

"But after the manner of narrators, I find I am amplifying instead of condensing. Let me shortly then say, that, having buoyed herself up with a persuasion that every day which came would bring an expected and desired note from me, expressive of regret for the past, and promises of renewed affection for the future, and every day finding herself doomed to disappointment, she would endure it no longer, and accordingly dispatched the note of which I have made mention. She was in the highest possible spirits on the occasion. Not a shadow of a doubt respecting the result presented itself to her mind. 'You don't for a moment think he wont come?' said she to Sophia, whose grave looks as she told her what she had done, sufficiently testified how little good, according to her view of the subject, was to be expected from such a step.

"'I was silent,' said Mrs. Mowbray, 'for I dared

not say what I felt on the occasion; and to restrain as much as I could, those transports of hope in my poor cousin, which I felt certain were all to be speedily crushed, I proposed our taking a ride, and visiting a relation who lived a few miles out of London. She readily consented; "for it will help to while away the time till evening," said she.'

"No answer but a personal one did she anticipate. How great was her astonishment therefore, when, on returning home to dinner, she discovered my note lying on the table. To seize and tear it open was the operation of a moment, and almost equally short was the interval that sufficed to reveal to her a truth which was to influence the whole residue of her days.

"'What is it, dear Fanny?' said Mrs. Mowbray, perceiving the unhappy girl to throw the letter down, and lean her head upon her clasped hands extended on the table before her, as if struck to the heart by what she had been reading.

"'What *is* it, dearest?'

"'He is a villain!' said Fanny. Well could I conceive the intensity of rage with which she uttered this opprobrious sentence.

"'Having read the note,' said Mrs. Mowbray, 'which she pointed to me to take up from the ground, I could say nothing, for it was no surprise to me. It was just what I expected it to be. I cannot dwell upon the immediate results of this severe trial,' she continued; 'I can only say, that

they were terrible both in kind and in degree. It may give you some idea of their nature, when I say, that for many weeks, I scarcely opened the door of a room in which she had been long alone, without a secret shudder at the idea of finding her the victim of self-destruction.'

"Oh, Seymour! do you think my inmost soul did not groan within me, at these words?"

"Yet you were on the whole, I think, to be exculpated," said he.

"I think I was," said I; "but as I have already observed, there is a something within the breast, which is grieved and wounded when another is pained; more particularly when the anguish occasioned is on the side of the affections."

"Yet how many men make it their business to flirt and trifle with women on this side," said he.

"Flirting and trifling," said I, "have little to do with the affections. But how it is possible for a man to seek the conquest of a loving, trusting heart, only as a paltry gratification to his vanity, I cannot conceive. Murder, on provocation, I think a light crime, in comparison with that spiritual assassination which accompanies the endeavouring to excite love, with a perfect consciousness that it will eventually be wounded and destroyed, by the very hand which insidiously tries to foster it into life."

"Men that act in that way, are never, I believe, happy," said Seymour.

"I should be tempted to say there was no God if they were," said I. I am aware that I expressed myself strongly; but this is a point on which I still feel strongly; perhaps from an undefined sentiment of remorse, or something akin to it. Be this as it may, I never contemplate the case of a broken hearted woman, realizing in her own bitter experience, those lines of the poet,

> Ere such a soul regain its blissful state,
> How often must it love, how often hate!
> How often hope, despair, resent, regret,
> Conceal, disdain, do all things but forget?

I never, I say, hear or read of such a one, without longing to whisper in her ear, 'Dear, indignant, injured woman! be satisfied to shut up your wrongs in silent suffering. It is your best, your only safe shelter from the storm of conflicting feelings which agitate your soul. Go not forth into this war of elements to fight a fruitless battle. In vain would you seek the wretched solace of revenge. In vain do you attempt to hurl upon the hard-hearted destroyer of your peace, the arrows of your indignation. They rebound from him hurtless, as from a rock, and fix their envenomed shafts in your already bleeding bosom. Be still; *your time will come.* Love is a sacred thing, and not to be safely trifled with; you may indeed confidently believe, that the course through life is never a smooth or happy one, of the man that wilfully sports with female affection.'

" 'The constant indulgence which she gave to tears,' continued Mrs. Mowbray, 'at length began to tell upon her health. A severe inflammatory attack, followed by consumptive symptoms, was of service in turning the current of her thoughts towards a subject, in comparison of which all mortal sorrows shrink into insignificance. Fanny had never before been in any danger of death. When therefore the medical men looked grave upon her case, and spoke of a necessity for her going into Devonshire for change of air, an idea of what might be the result of her illness broke upon her mind, and she was at once solemnized, not to say awe-struck. Intense in all her passions, that of fear had as strong a hold upon her as any other, when it came in a shape which no strength of will, no vehement love of dominion, nor any thing that she possessed of internal power, could furnish her with strength to defy. She was eager to live, and gave herself heart and soul to every thing that was proposed for her recovery; by her excitement in this, as in every other case, threatening to overthrow those hopes, which, had she been in a composed and tranquil state of mind, might pretty confidently have been entertained of her recovery. She did struggle through her illness; but was never again in perfectly good health. In fact, the fresh trials which awaited her in the loss of her father, and the great disorder in which he left his affairs, kept her constantly in a state of mind but too well fitted to

harass and impair her constitution.' I expressed a fervent hope that she was not left in straitened circumstances.

"She shook her head. 'Money however,' she continued, 'was not an important point to Fanny. She never erred on the side of extravagance in dress or amusement, or any of the common snares which lead many females into expense: her good sense never forsook her there.'

"'I never knew it to forsake her any where,' said I, 'except when it came in contact with her feelings.'

"'You say right,' she replied. 'But,' and she smiled, 'you would probably think that when poor Fanny had done with the fearful war between feeling and good sense which love occasioned, there was little more to dread for her in the shape of internal conflict.'

"'Unless,' said I, returning her smile, 'she became a devotee.'

"'Which she *did* become,' she replied.

"I cannot say I was surprised at this."

"Surprised!" said Seymour, "what else was there left for her to do? What is it that the greater part of disappointed women take up with, but religion, wine, or opium? And, let me tell you, that with your poor Fanny's temperament, it was a blessed escape that she did not fall upon one or the other of these two last resources."

"Heaven be praised!" said I, "that I was spared that shock; and that on the whole, her

course through the residue of life's journey, though strange and eccentric to the last degree, was still the course of a woman of principle and truth. But I must abbreviate my story, for the small hours of night are stealing upon us.

"'You would expect Fanny to go into every thing new and strange on the subject of religion,' said Mrs. Mowbray. 'Of course, therefore, she and every body else had been all in the wrong ever since she was born, in adopting the faith of their forefathers;—that 'dead letter' service, as she called it, of the Church of England. So for awhile, she went among the Baptists, having, as a prelude to her membership with them, received immersion at the hands of a devout tailor.'

"'Is it possible?' said I;—'poor Fanny!'

"'Indeed,' said she, 'you need not express any commiseration; for Fanny, in her own opinion, was, at this time, in no position to require it.'

"'But the tailor!' said I.

"'He was a very clever fellow,' said she, 'and I hope a good man; and as to his being a tailor, Fanny considered him only the more fitted for his vocation as a preacher, by his being amongst the illiterate and ignoble of this world. In all her harangues and arguments (and they were unceasing with almost every body that came in her way) there was nothing she so much insisted upon, as the beauty and necessity of a humble condition. She would talk about lowliness of mind, with a force

and personality that incensed the greater part of her friends and acquaintance, and occasioned their total withdrawal from her society.'

"But not to dwell on the painful recital which Mrs. Mowbray here gave me, let me briefly say, that after fluctuating for the best part of ten years, through almost every grade of religious profession, —trying all, and resting in none,—writing tracts and religious treatises in favour of the principles of every sect she joined, publishing them at her own expense, and of course, thereby losing money which she could ill afford to spare;—in a word, taking into the sphere of religion the same imperiousness and love of dominion which had characterised her in everything else,—her health again gave way, and constrained her to withdraw from all excitements, into the solitude of a sick room, which she then entered to quit no more.

"'I became her guest during the last two weeks only of her life,' said Mrs. Mowbray, 'my domestic duties preventing my giving her as much of my time as I could have wished. I cannot therefore tell you through what exercises of mind she had been conducted to peace and comfort. I know, however, that they must have been both numerous and severe; but when I came to her she was in the last stage of decline. All her mental conflicts seemed to be over, and I found her just what I could have wished to find her.'

"'She was calm and resigned then,' said I,

" 'She was more than this,' she replied, 'she was unspeakably happy. The force of her affectionate feelings, no longer absorbed by sublunary objects, had found their centre in the divine source from whence they emanated. Love! holy love! pervaded her whole being. Yet nothing enthusiastic, nothing but what denoted the most exalted piety, ever escaped from her lips. She seldom spoke of herself;—indeed she spoke but little on any subject.'

" 'And did she suffer any fanatical people to approach her at this time?' said I.

" 'Oh no,' she replied; 'Fanny had done with fanaticism and every other *ism*. She seemed now to lean on no outward prop, but to have concentrated her soul upon somewhat within herself, that was amply sufficient to console and to sustain her. It was only on the night preceding her dissolution that she alluded to her state of mind—and then but briefly. She was too weak, indeed, for conversation, but sweetly composed and peaceful, both in look and manner.'

" 'You seem very happy, dearest,' said I.

" 'I have found the way to happiness,' she replied. Then, after a little pause,—'I looked to creatures,' she said, 'and forgot the *nearness* of the Creator.' And, as if fearing I should not hear or understand the word, she repeated emphatically, '*nearness!*'

" 'Yes love, said I.'

" ' *In* Him we live and move and have our being,' she continued, her eyes uplifted with deep and solemn adoration. ' Oh Sophia, *His* love! His *sympathy* with His poor creatures. With such a one as me!' and tears as she spoke, stole gently down her cheeks. After a little pause she repeated the verse from Isaiah, " Can a woman forget her sucking child?" with such a smile! oh, such a heavenly smile! " Yea she *may* forget,"—and she looked at me earnestly. All human love may die and be forgotten, Sophia; "yet will I not forget thee!" No never—never!'

" ' She closed her eyes as she uttered these words,—the last that she spoke,—for very soon after, she sunk into a heavy slumber, and in a few hours peacefully passed away.'

" And now, Seymour," and I rose from my chair, "the tale is ended; the reminiscence is closed,—to be opened, I trust, no more."

He thanked me, and we parted. But memory was too busy with me that night to admit of my immediately seeking my pillow. I drew up the blind, and seated myself at the window to soothe my excited spirit with a sight of the tranquillity of nature. The moonbeams were sleeping on the lawn and chequering it with beautiful variations of pensive light and shade. " Dear Fanny!" broke from my lips as the thought occurred that she might be near me;—that she might be a witness of the emotions of my overcharged heart. " Dear —dear Fanny!"

CHAPTER IV.

A Walk and Talk.

SOME business taking Seymour to town soon after breakfast the next day, Mrs. Seymour challenged me to take a walk with her, during the greater part of which, out of the abundance of her mother's heart, she could only speak of her hopes and fears (but much more of the last) respecting her eldest son's success in life. She was full of anxiety sometimes lest he should read too hard and destroy his health; at others, lest he should be idle, and not read enough. By what she could gather from young Barnard the night before, she very much doubted if his joining a reading party to study with a tutor in the Scottish Highlands during the long vacation, was altogether a wise measure.

"William Barnard tells me that they are often very idle on these occasions," said she; "and pass a great part of their time in boating on the lakes,

and visiting, and falling in love; and the tutor, being almost as young and as fond of pleasure as his pupils, his presence is seldom any restraint upon them."

"That is very likely," said I; "but you must allow the poor fellows a little recreation. The boating and the visiting in moderation, will do them no harm; and as for the falling in love, I don't think it comes to much on these occasions. But surely, my dear lady, you are, as they say in the north, '*fearfu' foresighty.*'"

"I am," said she; "and I am quite aware of the foolishness of being so,—and wish most earnestly, that I could overcome it.—But I cannot."

"Are you quite sure that you try as much as you should, to resist it?"

"I *think* I do," she replied, "but it is a sort of second nature with me to be doubtful and apprehensive. The fact is, I hope and expect so ardently, I set my all of happiness upon such fragile things, that I can scarcely fail of being disappointed. —Oh, why do people wish for any thing, or care for any thing in this vain world!"

"Now do you know," said I, "that I could readily enough say 'Amen' to that; and thus might we, like the clown in 'As you like it,' rail at lady Fortune 'in good set terms,' for the rest of our walk. I used to do it *con amore* some thirty years ago."

"What made you leave it off," said she, laugh-

ing; "can you tell me? Or rather tell me what made you begin it;—you don't look like a person who has a taste for the lachrymose, any more than my good husband."

"Looks are deceitful things," said I; "and I *have* suffered sorrow and disappointment in my time; as who, at three score years of age has not,—or ought not to have? 'He that hath not suffered,' says Madame de Stael, 'what doth he know?'"

"Little enough of truth, I suspect," said she, "for truth is a possession that has to be paid for like other precious things."

"But let it be truth that we buy," I replied; "don't let us purchase a quantity of groundless suspicions and apprehensions, and such mere bundles of chaff, and then fancy that we have got hold of pure wheat."

"You mean to say then, Mr. Middleton, that I am in danger of being thus taken in? Well, I sometimes say so to myself. You cannot think," she continued, with a melancholy smile, "you cannot imagine, the pains I have taken to learn what is good, nor the volumes that I have written out, in the shape of extracts, from all the teachers of philosophy whose works fell in my way."

"Perhaps that was the reason why you failed to secure the thing itself;—if indeed, you *have* failed; a supposition I only make upon your own suggestion."

"You need not mince matters with me," she replied. "I love to come to the point, and bring home applications to my own individual case. I know I am restless and unhappy, and I know I should not be so;—I shall truly thank you therefore, if you can suggest to me some remedy for my mental maladies."

"I am afraid I must give the answer of Lady Macbeth's physician, 'therein the patient must minister to himself.'—But really now, Mrs. Seymour, touching that plan of yours of 'heaping up teachers' in the form of extracts, it seems to me to require a limit. I do not say but that to a certain extent, and at a certain stage of life (from fifteen to five-and-twenty, perhaps) it is of great value in helping to form and strengthen the principles and taste, and induce a love for thoughtful literature,—one of the most valuable of loves. But, unless the selection of such extracts is made with judgment and discrimination, worse than nothing is done for the individual's benefit."

"As for judgment and discrimination," said she, "I did not turn to them to help me. I was sensible of a craving for peace and rest,—for somewhat in short, that was wiser and more permanent than my own wayward feelings; and when I found, as I often did in the course of my reading, a thought or a precept that seemed to meet this want, and which made me lay down my book and say, '*how just!*'—'*how beautiful!*'—I made it my own di-

rectly, without waiting for any thing or any body else, to decide upon its value."

"You could not have a better guide, taking it for granted that the sensibility of its beauty and justice of which you speak, was grounded in truth."

"Is there a better test of our being guided by truth," said she, "than that of our loving those representations and views of it, which oppose our wishes, and show us how vain and empty those wishes are."

"It is a very good and sure one, I believe," replied I; "for, as says the wise and pious Fenelon, 'Most certainly that superior reason which corrects, reproves, and informs man, *against his own inclination*, can be no part of himself.'"

"Stay, stay," said she, suddenly producing from her reticule a little manuscript book, and taking her pencil in her hand, "Now repeat that once more, while I write it down."

"Instead of that, allow me to give you another remark from the same author," said I.

"Pray do," she replied, "for I am a miser in these matters."

"It is this—'You know a great deal more than you practise,' (he is writing to a disciple of his who requested his spiritual counsel) 'and have much less occasion for new lights than to follow those you have already received.'"

"I wonder how many times I have said that to myself," she observed, as she closed her book.

"Then, let me counsel you not to have to say it any more. There is a covetousness of the mind for acquisition, which pursues it even in its search after truth; but because we are looking for so good a thing, we never suppose we can have too much of it, or be diving too often into the well where the proverb says it lies."

"And can we?" she asked with a look of surprize.

"I think," replied I, "that we can never be built too steadfastly and permanently upon truthful principles; which, of course, must be developed and cultivated in us by every proper means; amongst which, thoughtful reading and meditation occupy a prominent place. But the events and circumstances of life which exercise our principles, and which call upon us to make a practical application of the truths we know, these are our best instructors; and if we fail in obedience here, and look for our lessons in a sofa-reclining perusal of philosophy, thinking to glide as easily into goodness and self-discipline, as we can sink into an after dinner's nap, I am afraid we shall make no way at all in learning the art of being happy; for that is the sum and substance of what we are seeking, is it not?"

"No doubt," said she. "But how to find it, that is the question?"

"I believe we may simplify it," said I, "into a well-sustained, systematic habit of self-control."

"It is a hard, an unlovely thing, though, that self-control," she replied.

"Pride, which is often taken for it, is a hard and unlovely thing, I grant. But the self-control I mean, springs from another root. It suffers, not as pride does, because to suffer is less degrading than to murmur; but because by suffering, and by being serene and patient in endurance, experience, the richest thing in all the world, is acquired. Experience, which, as Miss Barrett beautifully expresses it—

> 'Like a pale musician, holds
> A dulcimer of patience in his hand,
> Whence harmonies we cannot understand,
> Of God's will in his world, the strain unfolds
> In sad perplexed minors.'"

"Ah charming!" said she; "'a dulcimer of patience!' how sweet an idea!"

"And how dainty sweet the thing itself!" said I.

"Have you any of it to spare?" and she looked at me rather archly.

"Not a grain. It is because of the smallness of my store, that it seems to me so inestimably precious. I am quite sure, however, that I should be none the richer in patience, or any other virtue, by filling a common-place book with extracts in its praise. Not but what I have done a great deal in that way in former times: and, as I said just now, it is to a certain extent very useful. But there is a

time to have done with teachers, of an outward kind at least."

"Of an outward kind!" she repeated. "Are not all books and modes of teaching necessarily external to us?"

"Of course they are; but that to which they appeal is interior, spiritual, and divine; or they might as well be addressed to the beasts of the field."

"I don't catch your meaning," said she.

"What was it then, in you and in me, that so entirely approved of, and united with, the few lines of Miss Barrett's which I just now repeated? What made their beauty? Was it the words?"

"No, certainly; it was the sweetness of the idea," she replied.

"And that," said I, "was equally relished by both of us, because it struck upon something in our interior natures which lovingly responded to it, as it would indeed to every holy idea which could be addressed to it."

"What can that something be?" she asked.

"It is a spark of the divine within us," said I, "which readily assimilates with truth and beauty, as being of its own nature. Every thing assimilates with its own; the pure with the pure, the corrupt with the unholy."

"Oh go on," said she, "I love to hear any thing serious and suggestive, and that may help to make me better."

I smiled at her earnestness. "I have little to

say," I continued, "that is worth your hearing. I can only turn you for instruction to a holy guide within yourself, and to those circumstances and occasions of daily occurrence which, by trying our tempers and feelings, afford us constant scope for obeying the monitions of that interior teacher."

"Ah," said she, "your lot must be a very favoured one in respect to the daily trials to which you allude. You are not like me, for instance; you have none of the anxieties of domestic life,—no children to be solicitous about,—no"——

"Stop, stop, my good lady. Remember that 'the heart knoweth its own bitterness,' and do not run away with a notion that because I am single I am exempt from domestic trial. Solitude is in itself a trial; and *self*, I am sure is another. Added to which, I have had many things to bear from the waywardness and ingratitude of some whom I have endeavoured to serve, and the disappointment of finding it impossible to help them. In a word, believe, for you certainly may, that I have had quite as much to endure in degree, though not in kind, as you yourself have."

"I ought not to doubt it," said she. "Excuse me that I spoke so hastily. Every body thinks their own lot peculiar in trial, and is ready to say, had it been any thing but this, I could have borne it. But I want to know more respecting the practical use you would make of that something interior and divine within us."

"I have already intimated," said I, "that I

would make it useful as a living guide, in place of storing my memory with dead maxims."

"Nothing that is true can ever die," she replied; "and that which struck me as forcible and just twenty years ago, will equally strike me as being so to-day."

"That is not quite so clear, for your views of things may change. Many sentiments which struck me as apposite and true, twenty years ago, would seem exceedingly vapid to me now."

"That may be because you have lost some of your interest in things through the languor of advancing life," she replied.

"No; it is because I have been gradually turning away from external and human teaching, and have been endeavouring to give my attention to the pointings of somewhat holy and true within my own breast, which, like the touch of Ithuriel's spear, separates the precious from the vile, and shows the true from the false, at a glance."

"Are you talking of conscience all this time?" she asked.

"Rather of something that enlightens the conscience," said I; "just as it enlightens the whole class of moral and mental powers. But stay—let me illustrate—I can never get far without an illustration. You see this beautiful landscape around us, and how brilliant and glowing it is now. But what would it be at midnight?"

"Dark and gloomy, and scarcely to be distinguished from Newmarket Heath," she replied.

"It is the glorious light of the sun, then, that not only discloses, but enhances its beauties of hill and dale, tree and shrub, and so on."

"Of course."

"Well then, in the same way a ray from a spiritual sun, as I conceive, enlightens, and warms, and reveals to the mind of man all beauty and truth. It *shows* it to him just as the natural sun shows us the objects around us. And when the mind is turned away from this spiritual light, (which it always is when it gives itself to sensual and transitory pleasures and pursuits) it becomes enveloped in obscurity, more or less deep, just as it is more or less plunged in the night and darkness of the animal life."

"Well, that's really very pretty; but I am at a loss to know how to make it practical for every day use."

"I make it practical in this way," said I. "I endeavour, with much feebleness I grant, and many mistakes, but still I do make it my aim to walk in this interior light; and, as much as I can, to unite myself to it, by observing and obeying its revelations."

"Surely," said she, "this is much the same as saying that you consider yourself to be actually inspired."

"And suppose I did?"

"Suppose you did! why—would it not be very" —she stopped.

"Very what?"

"Very presumptuous," at length she added—not altogether without a look of horror.

"Dear Mrs. Seymour," said I, "don't be frightened at a word. It is the word *inspired* that terrifies you. Yet you are taught to pray for divine aid; you do not shrink from doing this, do you?"

"Certainly not. I trust I do it every day of my life."

"And you hope to receive an answer to your petitions?"

"Of course I do."

"But may I ask you in what way; under what modification you expect the answer to be imparted?"

"In what way? Why, just as all thoughtful, earnest people expect it."

"My dear lady, excuse me, but that is no answer; unless you tell me also how all thoughtful, earnest people expect it."

"I expect to find my mind strengthened to resist temptation, to endure trial, and every way benefited by the exercise of prayer," she replied.

"It is a very just expectation," said I; "but you do not define it sufficiently. You describe it in too general and loose a signification for much practical use. For instance, you say that you expect to find your mind strengthened to resist temptation and to endure trial; that is, you expect to

find somewhat either given, or developed within your own interior, which shall act as your helper in moments of spiritual exigency?"

"Exactly so."

"But *do* you find this to be the case? *Are* you acquainted with any thing 'quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword;' which, at the first stirring of evil, shows its nature in the flash of a moment, and to which you, with a holy instinct, yield immediate obedience?"

"I know the power of conscience," she replied, "if that is what you mean."

"It acts chiefly, though not exclusively, through the conscience," said I, "but it is not the conscience to which I allude, because experience proves that conscience may be impaired and misdirected."

"I should doubt that," said she.

"Look at the case of a devout Mahometan," I replied, "who would think it against his conscience to drink wine, but not to keep half a dozen wives. Look at many of the trading Jews here in London, who would feel it against their conscience to sell any thing on their Sabbath, but not to cheat to the uttermost as soon as it was over. When we consider the vagueness and confusion, to say nothing of the latitude attached to what people call their conscience, I believe there can be no doubt of the possibility of its being duped into the service of the passions; but there is no possibility of deterioration to this divine ray which enlightens the conscience.

There is no more possibility of it than of putting out yonder glorious light of the natural day."

"And do you suppose that it is this divine ray, as you call it, which suggests the pleasurable emotions with which we contemplate beauty in natural objects? I should, at all events, have supposed its operations confined to the sphere of spiritual right and wrong."

"You must not suppose it confined to any thing," said I; "but contemplate its holy influence as infinite and universal in operation; in so far, at least, as people will allow it to enlighten them. They *may* shut it out from their minds, just as they can shut out the light of the sun, and live in a cellar."

"I can contemplate the operation of a divine principle in holy things," said she, "but I should hesitate to apply it to subjects of mere taste and imagination."

"All true beauty is of a holy character," replied I, "let it be found where it may; and never could that line of Moore's,

'All things fair and sweet are thine,'

be more justly applicable, than to the gleam from heaven of which we are now speaking."

"Well, it may be so," said she; "but I am afraid some persons would think these views somewhat latitudinarian, if not absolutely irreligious."

"I cannot help that. According to my conception of the subject, they are not only consistent

with, but highly suggestive of, right views of religion."

"I wish you would tell me what your ideas of religion are?"

I smiled at the naïveté with which she made an inquiry which comprehended (if honestly responded to) a revelation of my most secret thoughts and aspirations.

"I was giving you a little inkling on that point," said I, "just now, when you started off, alarmed with the idea of my thinking myself inspired."

"I wont do so any more; I will let you call yourself inspired if you like."

"We will use some other word," said I; "for words are often signals for a terrible onslaught upon things. I will not say then that I believe myself to be inspired; but I will boldly say, that I believe myself, as occasion requires, to be inwardly enlightened and taught by something spiritual and divine, and as such, decidedly no part of myself."

"You know this upon the testimony of Scripture," she observed.

"I may learn the existence of such a thing from the teaching of Scripture, but I can only *know* it practically from a personal acquaintance with its agency."

"Of course we believe what the Scripture tells us," she observed.

"That does not necessarily follow; for how many thousand persons hear the doctrines of Scripture

without adopting any influential belief in them! Now, take this very doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit. None can be more plainly and repeatedly laid down in the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament. Take one verse only, wherein the thing of which I am speaking is actually specified in the most direct terms. It occurs, if I remember right, in Isaiah. 'And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye would turn to the right hand, and when ye would turn to the left.' Can you really believe, that out of the numberless individuals who every now and then, at church, if no where else, must hear that remarkable Scripture,—can you, I say, really take it for granted, that they receive and act upon it as a reality? Excuse me if I bring the thing to a point, by asking you if you yourself do?"

She mused a few moments, at length she said,—"Not as much as I ought. But I must turn round and say, do *you?*"

"Certainly not as much as I ought, any more than yourself. But that is not the question. You are asking me what my ideas of religion are. Without going into any details respecting my views of its specific doctrines, I simplify them into faith in the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit. How far I obey the faith I hold, is another matter."

"I believe this doctrine of faith in an inward and spiritual guide, is not as much insisted upon as it ought to be," she replied.

"Yet no religious doctrine can be so practical, and consequently so immensely important as this," said I. "It is to me, I confess, the rock on which I repose for guidance, for strength, for comfort, and for every thing in which truth is to be found. For, what am I,—what are you,—what is any human being in itself, and propped only on its own resources? What is it but a blunderer and a sufferer, groping through a labyrinth of doubts and mysteries, stumbling over, and overthrown by, masses of evil at every turn, yet driven forward by irresistible necessity into results of which it knows nothing but that they comprize sorrow, and pain, and death?"

"Do you not think that the gift of reason is fitted to deliver human beings from becoming quite so helpless and pitiable?"

"It is a noble gift," said I; "but totally inadequate to deliver the soul from the distress and dismay which its present condition of mystery and misery is calculated to produce. What says a poet* whom no one will suspect of any desire to undervalue the gift of reason.

'Ah, if she lend not arms as well as rules,
What can she more, than tell us we are fools;
Teach us to mourn our nature,—not to mend,
A sharp accuser,—but a helpless friend.'

No, it is only when we believe, as a verse in the book of Job tells us, 'that there is a spirit in man,

* Pope.

and that the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding,' and that, according to St. Paul, this 'manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal;'—it is only, in short, when he has faith in the presence within him of something stronger, wiser, and better than himself, that the human being can possibly come to interior stability and peace."

"But how is this faith to be wrought?"

"Let me first inquire if you actually believe that 'there *is* a Spirit in man, and that the inspiration of the Almighty *does* give him understanding?'"

"Assuredly I do."

"You think you do, no doubt. Nothing is so easy as to take it for granted that we believe religious truths, when we do not even know what they contain. This very doctrine of there being a Spirit in man superior to himself, and designed by the Almighty to give him understanding, perhaps you may find, upon examination, that you are very little influenced by, in a consistent practical way. For instance, when you are fretting and disquieting yourself with 'casting the fashion of uncertain evils,' are you acquainted with any thing within you, that points to the present moment as that which alone is real, and with which your proper business lies?"

"I find something within that tells me often enough, that it is very foolish to be anxious about the future; but"—she hesitated.

"You don't attend to this interior Reprover?"

"Not always."

"In fact, you commonly disregard it?"

"I am afraid too often."

"Then, my dear lady, you must not say that you believe in it; for faith, in the lowest degree, implies some confidence in, and some obedience to, a spiritual and invisible guide."

"Yet, I must have some faith," she replied, "or I should know nothing of prayer; and I know that I have some acquaintance with that duty. My unhappy temperament would of itself constrain me to seek comfort and aid from Him who alone can give it."

I said a few words expressive of the real interest I felt for her spiritual conflicts.

"The very act of prayer in itself tends to soothe and elevate the mind, dear Mrs. Seymour," said I; "but there is a stillness to be sought afterwards, which I believe to be equally beneficial. Fenelon strongly advises a quarter of an hour's interior silence twice a day, to one of his pupils; and I really think if you were to adopt this habit, you would find great benefit to result from it. At all events, the effort to be still for a time, and to silence the multiplicity of feelings that buzz about the interior kingdom, would of itself be calculated to discipline and subdue your mind."

"It has struck me several times," said she, "since we have been talking, that your views of

religion are nothing else than the Quakers' doctrine of silent worship, and waiting to be moved by the Spirit."

"Suppose they be—what then."

"I should think them very dangerous doctrines!" she replied; "for only look what eccentricities and absurdities they have been the means of guiding them into!"

"All such eccentricities, and a thousand worse," said I, "the mind is liable to fall into, when it considers that reason is to be set aside as having nothing to do in divine matters."

"But did you not yourself say as much just now?"

"No,—I said that reason was inadequate to deliver the soul from the miseries of its human condition; but that is a very different thing from saying it is no helper in doing so; and a still more different thing from saying that it is to be wholly set aside in all religious considerations. I would enlist *all* the powers of the mind in the service of religion, but merely as *servants;* and reason is to be a servant as well as the rest. It is the best servant that man has, and none more in unity with its lawful master,—for, as Dr. Whichcote says, 'there is an eternal amity between truth and reason.' When, therefore, human beings throw this useful servant overboard, no wonder that they do not know how to steer their vessel aright. This extravagance of the imagination, or in more simple

parlance, this fanaticism it is, which has caused all the preposterous folly, and what is far worse, all the crime and bloodshed which has disgraced the name of religion since the world began. People begin to be devout by thinking they must sacrifice their reason."

"They build, I suppose, upon certain texts of Scripture," she replied, "which they consider as favouring their view of the matter."

"Whatever they build upon," said I, "can never supersede the testimony which every man has within himself, that God commands him to act in accordance with his reason—supposing his reason to have been cultivated according to its nature, as a moral guide and servant of man."

"Then you *do* make reason the sovereign rule after all."

"No, no;" and I shook my head impatiently, though I could not help smiling at her womanish pertinacity. "I make the Holy Spirit of truth my rule. Reason may be corrupted, and often is; but the Spirit of Truth cannot be."

"Is it easy to distinguish and separate the agency of the two faculties?" she asked.

"We may certainly distinguish when reason does *not* act, and when this is the case, we may be assured that neither does the Holy Spirit act."

"Are they always then united in action, so that one is never found in separate operation?"

"No, not exactly so; for reason may be exer-

cised, and most commonly is, without any conscious reference to spiritual illumination. It may even be exercised in direct opposition to it, because, as I have just said, it may be defiled, like any other natural power of man. But when the Spirit acts, it always uses reason in its service."

"When the thing in question is unreasonable, you would say then, that it could not proceed from the spirit?"

"Certainly I should. Now with regard to the Quakers, let me give you an illustration of my views on this point. There are two peculiarities (at least we will confine ourselves to two) that of a mode of speech, and a mode of worship, in adopting which, they conceive themselves to be directed by the internal guidance of the Holy Spirit. Now it seems to me, with regard to the first, that, had they not made it a principle to discard the influence of reason, they could never have supposed themselves divinely directed to persist in this mode of speech; for reason must have shown them that what they allege as a motive for their use of '*thee*,' and '*thou*,' and first day, second day, first month, second month,' and so on, is altogether absurd."

"What is that motive?" said she.

"Why, with respect to the days of the week and month, they refuse the common usage, lest they should be supposed to worship Thor and Woden, and such like heathen deities, from whom

the names of Thursday, Wednesday, &c. are derived. And, with regard to the use of '*you*,' (which to be sure is bad grammar, addressed to a single person, though not much mended by their 'will *thee* do so and so,') they urge as their reason for avoiding it, that it was first used towards monarchs in the plenitude of arrogance, and because the plural number suited best with the insatiable pride of their demands; and having sunk down into common usage, they think they should be ministering to the vanity of human nature in adopting it."

"But who in the world knows or cares anything about the derivation of the days of the week or month?" said she; "or whose pride is ministered to by being addressed as 'you' instead of 'thou?'"

"In the days when George Fox, their founder, conceived himself required to use the words 'thee' and 'thou,'" said I, "there was a reason, and a good one for it, because it was the usual mode of speech in that class of life in which honest George was born and moved; and to have adopted a style of address that was characteristic of more refined and fashionable circles, would have been quite needless and inconsistent, and so far, a dereliction of his principles. But time having rendered the custom almost universal, which was then perhaps peculiar to a particular part of the community, there can be no really sufficient reason for their adherence to a mode of speech so strange and pre-

posterous, that the greater part of them evade it with a *theeing* instead of a *thouing* as rather nearer to the standard of English talk."

"The very circumstance of such an evasion should show them that the practice is unreasonable and absurd," said she, "for they would not, I dare say, feel ashamed of any thing that was grounded upon really religious principle."

"No, they are not, for instance, ashamed of, however they may disrelish (as I believe a great many of them do) their mode of silent worship;—which is the second point to which I alluded as illustrative of my views respecting the agency of interior guidance. I have said that reason would, as I conceive, oppose the use of such needless singularities of speech, as must necessarily render individuals somewhat ridiculous, and occasion an insurmountable barrier between them and the rest of their fellow creatures, more particularly, when no broad fundamental principle was at stake, in the adoption of these eccentricities. But reason herself would take the part of that holy monitor which pointed to interior quietness and retirement of spirit, as a fit preparation for the worship of that Great Being whom none of us know how to address as we ought, and into whose presence it befits us to come with a lowliness of heart and a subjection of mind, which is only to be obtained by the preparation of inward silence, and a severely chastised imagination."

"Do you approve of their mode of worship?" she asked.

"Certainly not, as a mode adapted for public use; because the weakness of human nature, and its incapacity for long continued introversion of mind, renders nothing but silence quite an unmeaning and fatiguing exercise to the greater part of persons. But the principle of preparatory silence to all worship, whether public or private, I have no doubt about, as founded in the dictates of the Spirit of Truth."

"Well, I think I can discern the distinction you draw," said she, "and can perceive that instead of fostering unreasonable singularities, it is the work of an infinite, free, and universal Spirit to lead the mind to a view of principles and large results, and to deliver it, by the liberality of its nature, from all narrow, one-sided apprehensions, and dealing with details and bits and parcels of things. Still, I must repeat, that I think there is a leaning in your views to the Quakers' doctrine."

"If by *their* doctrine," said I, "you mean a waiting upon the influences of the Holy Spirit, it is no more theirs nowadays, than it is that of any other religious sect. If you were to hear one of their ministers preach now, you would only listen to such a discourse as you might hear in any other place of worship. The Primitive Quakers, indeed, exalted the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit above every other doctrine; and you may find

something in their testimonies, as handed down in their records, that is quite distinct from all other preaching, and very particularly so, from that of their successors in the ministry. But they, no more than their descendants, held any new doctrine in this respect; for it is the doctrine of Scripture, and was the doctrine of many to whom the Scriptures never came. Many of those philosophers whom we courteously call heathen, were well acquainted with that interior guide of which we have been speaking. What was the demon of Socrates, but this very thing under another name? How remarkable is that passage in his apology wherein he says, 'Perhaps it may appear absurd, that going about and involving myself in a multiplicity of affairs, I should privately advise, but that I should never dare to come to your convention and consult for the city. The cause of this is that which you have often heard me every where asserting; viz. because a certain divine voice is present within me, which also Melitus in his accusation derided. This voice attended me from a child; and when it is present, always *dissuades* me from what I intended to do, but never *incites* me.' This it is, which opposed my engaging in political affairs; and to me, its opposition appears all beautiful.'"

"That is very striking," said she; "and I much like the idea of this interior voice; yet, I confess that I should greatly fear the hazard of taking that to be its dictates, which was not so; and of thus

being led into all manner of superstition,—a thing of which I have the greatest dread; for I know something of the effects it produces. I assure you, Mr. Middleton, that a friend of mine was well acquainted with a person of a very devotional mind, and certainly in the full possession of his senses, who considered himself to be divinely required to wear the same shirt several weeks together without its being washed, in order to humble his pride. My friend often saw him while he was passing through this trial; and was, as she said, greatly edified by the meekness and submission with which he bore it."

"I do not believe any thing too preposterous and absurd for people to do, when once they abandon their reason," said I; "and it is the abandonment of reason which opens the door to superstition, that hateful influence, which, like the vampire sucking the life blood of its victims, absorbs the vitality of every sane and sober principle of the mind that entertains it. But you need not fear to be thus subjugated, if you always endeavour to retain a view of the reason of a question. There is a prodigious power in the reason of a thing."

"But there are subjects," she observed, "which, though not contrary to reason, are greatly above its comprehension."

"Unquestionably," said I; "but these are subjects with which you will seldom have much to do in the practical business of life. Reason serves as

the guide, and the only guide of mankind in general, and enables them to get on in most things well enough, and in some, perhaps, only too well."

"I don't clearly understand you," said she.

"Why, it helps the cheat, and the robber, and the murderer too well, does it not, when it enables them to consider and plan their purposes, and execute them to the best of their ability?"

"The doings of such people are not the work of reason," she replied.

"Not of enlightened reason, certainly," said I; "not of reason used as a servant by its rightful lord, the Spirit of Truth; but assuredly such persons are aided by reason, as man under the influence of his corrupt self-will and disordered passions often is helped by it."

"Thus contemplated," she replied, "reason would seem but a sorry gift to man."

"Far from it," said I. "I say again, that it is the noblest of man's natural gifts; but, I also say again, that it *may* be desecrated to vile services and uses. But that higher guide of which we have been speaking, never can be. Many persons may be dishonest who have the full exercise of their reason; no one can be so who has the full exercise of this divine instinct.

"If it be an instinct," said she, "why does it not act promptly and intuitively in all alike, and come to our help when wanted, just as reason does?"

"Because, in the first place, its proper scope is

in a more holy and exalted sphere than that of reason," said I; "and secondly, in consequence of its exaltation, it is not attended to and assiduously cultivated as reason is. A child soon becomes sharp in using its reason, because it has its own little purposes to consider and contrive by the help of it. Things are always going on from the cradle to the grave, to facilitate the action of reason; but it is not by sharpening the wits, but by nurturing the conscience (in which part of the soul it resides) that this holy faculty can be developed."

"What a pity then," said she, "that the conscience is not more cared for in early instruction."

"It *is* a pity, indeed," said I, "that instead of loading children's minds with what must be to them unintelligible doctrines, this innate seed of holiness and truth is not more trusted and appealed to. For it only waits the right conditions to do its own work."

"The conditions I suppose you mean of education," said she.

"That word may do, perhaps, for want of a better; but it is too stiff, too mechanical for what I mean."

"Do try, then, and explain your meaning."

"Assuming it as a fact," said I, "that the Giver of all good has sown a divine and incorruptible seed of his own nature in the soul of man, I contemplate it as lying there awaiting those holy influences which are as essential to its development and growth, as

light, air, and water are to the advancement of the plant or flower. These influences you may call, if you like, education; but I should prefer something more spontaneous and inartificial than any systematic mode of teaching."

"You would not, surely, let a child grow up without education of some sort?" said she.

"By no means; educate *that* in the child which comes under the proper appeal of rules and systems. Make him as good a scholar, and drive as much head knowledge into him as you can. But this holy thing of which I am speaking, does not, I think, respond to these hard knocks at the door. It is very meek, pure, and gentle, and asks for great tenderness and delicacy of treatment on the part of its cultivator, which being given to it, you may depend upon its growing into its appointed dominion, and doing its appointed work."

"According to your view of the case, there is then a holy seed sown in the child's mind, only waiting to be developed by what you call cultivation?"

"Rightly administered," said I.

"Of course."

"Excuse me, but in my view of the subject, it is not quite so much a matter of course as you may suppose. It is a matter of course I am well aware, to pursue a certain process, and bring the minds of children under the influence of particular systems of instruction; and that may do well

enough for head knowledge;—I find no fault with it there; but I do not think it likely to be successful here."

"Then, in what way would you proceed?"

"I would not force things," said I. "The word spoken in due season, is worth a thousand unseasonable ones."

"But surely, you must not trust to the child's inclination for receiving religious instruction, and wait for that?"

"I would trust to the child's *want* of it, and wait for that," said I. "I do not mean by the child's want, his own *desire* to receive it, but his necessity."

"I doubt that would be too vague and uncertain a thing to trust to," she replied.

"Do you think it either vague or uncertain, that he would do something morally wrong;—tell a lie, for instance?"

"Why no;—I fear there can be no doubt of his offering such occasions for instruction."

"Then I would carefully use such an occasion," said I. "It is the time for a refreshing shower of heavenly influences on the part of the cultivator. The child falls into sin, as it is to be expected he should; for, although he has this precious redeeming seed of truth and holiness within him, he has many other more agreeable looking things within him also; which are not only different in kind, but absolutely at war with this little lowly principle of

goodness. Hence, he is in obvious danger of uniting himself with the pleasurable and sensual part of his nature, which wills nothing but its own gratification. But his attention, as occasion offers, must be withdrawn from this exclusive union of himself to his own will; and he must be shown that he has another will within him, which he is to reverence and obey, as the will of God."

"The cultivator is to point out to him I suppose, how and when, this divine will acts?" said she.

"Yes. Take the case of his having told a lie—I will suppose an efficient instructor to probe the child's mind, and to make him a sharer in his own feelings on this occasion, in some such way as this —'You do not know, dear child, how much you have grieved me by this transgression;—and not only me, but one much greater than I am; one that is very near you—one that loves you very dearly—one that watches over you for good continually, and is always seeking to save you from sin and shame. Did you not hear the gentle voice of this dear friend, trying to prevent your saying what was not true, and wishing to hinder you from making yourself mean and disgraceful? Oh, how much you ought to love and mind that gentle loving voice, which whispers in your heart, *Don't do that wrong thing; don't grieve me by making yourself base and wicked.*' Surely, if in some such way as this, and as opportunity offered (alas!

there is no doubt of its offering often enough) this precious witness were appealed to, and brought to the assistance of the soul it was intended to redeem and purify, there would be wrought within it a moral force sufficient for all its exigencies?"

"I should be glad to believe this," she replied, "I should be truly glad to believe it; for oh, how greatly does the erring, suffering, solitary soul stand in need of such a comforter and guide within its mysterious depths!"

"You *may* believe it, dear Mrs. Seymour," said I, "yes, you may confidently believe, that in every pure and holy idea, in every uplifting of the creaturely heart towards its Creator, whether in a way of prayer or praise, of suffering or of enjoying, this divine Spirit manifests its agency. How precious was the contemplation of it to the Psalmist, when he exclaims, 'thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it!' In what deep reverence were its rebukes held by St. Augustine, when he said, 'I tremble in so far as I am unlike this light, I am inflamed, in so far as I resemble it. It is wisdom,' he continues, 'which shineth in unto me, and dispelleth the cloud, which, when I depart from her, covers me with darkness, and a burden of chastisement.'

"Endeavour to believe in, and love it also;" said I; "trust its dictates, hearken to its reproofs, and it will grow and expand as a lily,—'The solitary place of your spirit shall be glad for it, and the

desert of your soul shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.'"

"Ah," said she, with glistening eyes, "that which brings me to God as to a Father and a Friend, to one whose love is boundless and unfathomable as himself, that is the religion I desire to call mine."

Our subject here came to a close by our finding ourselves arrived at home.

CHAPTER V.

An Affirmative Man.

MY intended week's visit with the Seymours had been lengthened into a fortnight, and I was still kindly urged to prolong my stay; but I had some business to transact in London previous to my return home, and a visit to make to a married niece living in Suffolk, which required me now to take leave of my agreeable friends.

Parting with pleasant people has a tinge of melancholy in it at all times; more particularly, when, however we may soften the farewell with thoughts and hopes of meeting again, and renewing our recent intercourse, there is a secret feeling in the mind that this will not happen; a feeling, which, under my circumstances of advancing age, and distance from the metropolis, I could not but experience on the present occasion.

"I shall expect you to write to me," said Mrs. Seymour, "and as you forbid me to refer to my

common-place book any more, you must remember to supply its place with all the sprinklings of philosophy you can."

"No, no, come and preach in person," said Seymour, "and then you can take us both in hand at the same time."

"You must both of you come down, and hear me preach at my hermitage yonder," replied I.

"We'll see," said Seymour, when I more seriously pressed an invitation which I very sincerely though rather hopelessly desire that they may accept.

"And now for another phase of this work-o'-day world!" thought I, as, with a parting nod to my friends, as they stood at the door to see me off, the conductor of the omnibus having shouted "all right!" we drove off.

My heart was somewhat heavy, and with a *sotto voce* "heigh-ho!" I looked round, as I always do in an omnibus, to see what my companions were like. Just before me sat two elderly ladies in deep and handsome mourning, whose resemblance to each other proclaimed them to be sisters; and whose wan, meek, and disappointed cast of countenance, equally, as I thought, testified them to be single women, linked to one another as to all that was left to them in the shape of something to love. They seemed to be going upon a visit of condolence somewhere, and one from which they anticipated pain; for every now and then they wiped

away a quiet tear from their eyes. By their side sat a smart young man, all be-studded, and be-ringed, and kid-gloved, in the most approved fashion; and who appeared to be as full of joy as the poor ladies were of woe. Something extremely agreeable was clearly before his imagination, the exuberance of which, prompted a strong effort to elicit conversation from an old gentleman who was placed opposite to him.

I have a sympathy with feeling, which I suppose my habits of solitude may have nursed into something of a morbid kind. Be this as it may, I believe I suffer more as a witness under certain circumstances, than those who are actually engaged in them. I am sure I did on this occasion;—for, whilst I was inwardly scarified by the rough, repulsive "yes,—no,—I don't know anything about it," of this grumpy old gentleman, who, crumpled up in his corner, returned the complacent chat of the other, with looks that plainly said "hold your tongue, and don't bother me,"—the young man received these checks as though they were words without meaning, and with the most dauntless indifference, continued his assaults, till the old man, buttoning his coat about his chin, and settling himself upon his seat with his face totally averted, put a stop to his capability of further molesting him. "I shall have it now," thought I;—"for it will be impossible for that lad, loaded as he is with complacency, to keep silent." We stopped

happily, to take in an old lady of such amplitude of dimensions, as effectually separated us; and the young man, compelled to be quiet, took out of his pocket a letter, with which he occupied himself, till we got into Tottenham Court Road. We were about the middle of it, when a tremendous "halloo!" and an uplifted stick hailing the conductor, announced another arrival, while a voice loud enough to be heard nearly half a mile off, exclaiming "Set me down at the end of Chancery Lane," made me start with an idea of its being one that was formerly very familiar to me.—"That's surely the very man!" said I to myself, as a fine portly personage, rather shabbily attired, entered the vehicle.—"He has grown very grey and wrinkled," I continued, pursuing my cogitations;—"but that would be about the *go* of the matter as to appearance, by this time."

In the meanwhile, the newly arrived, who seated himself by my side, having glanced right and left with superlative indifference, rested his eyes for a moment on me.

"It is surely Mr. Grey?" said I aloud, as I looked earnestly at him.

"Is it"—and he looked as earnestly at me,—"Mid-dle-ton?" spinning out the appellative to the full satisfaction of any curiosity our travelling companions might have to know my name.

Having hurra'd after a fashion of his own, at our unexpected meeting, he proceeded (as regard-

less of the presence of other people, as if we had been by ourselves in a prairie) to narrate a heap of magnificent projects with which his head was filled, but of which, owing to the noise of our transit down Holborn, I could make out but little; so I will employ the interval in introducing my reader to as much of the history of Mr. Grey, as I was myself acquainted with. I had known him at college, where he distinguished himself a great deal more by his eccentricities, than by his habits of study. He came late to the University;—having been previously engaged in business, for which he was designed and educated, but which he abandoned with a view to read for orders, intending, most probably, to sway the ecclesiastical world as an archbishop. But there were too many candidates in that line to hold out much prospect of success; and having done little else than lose both time and money, he quitted college, and devoted himself to a variety of projects for regenerating the world; as a fit preparation for which, he spent two or three years abroad with Pestalozzi;—from thence, he migrated to America, and having looked after modes of education there,—he was now returned to devote himself, as far as I could gather, to his wonted purpose of reforming mankind.

This was a design he had taken in hand when I first became acquainted with him; and many were the crotchets that occupied his imagination on this subject, during his residence in college. He was

just a specimen of that particular class of mankind who can never be quiet; but who act as a disturbing force upon all within their influence. Gifted with considerable shrewdness, rather than wisdom, strong in pride, and indomitable on the side of adhesion to his own opinions; bold too, in the courage and self-reliance which clever and half educated people are seldom deficient in, he never wanted admirers and converts from the ranks of those subalterns in life's army, who are continually upon the watch for advancement, and whose whole ambition is to be known and distinguished,—no matter for what, provided they can but come out of their proper obscurity, and be observed. He had a host of adherents of this sort at college, and was never likely to be without them to the end of his days; —it being a part of his nature to become the idol of a circle, and as such autocrats usually are, to be very well satisfied with any sort of disciples he could obtain.

I had a prophetic glance in the twinkling of an eye, as to what would be the result of our meeting; and feeling only too sure that I must resign myself to some sort of martyrdom, I endeavoured to arrest his volubility (which evidently afforded high amusement to the omnibus community) by telling him that I would go home with him, if he would allow me, when I could better hear and attend to all he had to say.

"And have you no Mrs. Grey to introduce me to?" said I, as we walked up Chancery Lane.

"Bah!" and he put up his lip with infinite scorn—"my life, sir, has had nobler objects to engage its attention. I am wedded to the cause of humanity;—my spouse is the common good,—the welfare of the world."

Having deposited a note at the chambers of a friend, we proceeded to Carey-street, where his lodgings he said were situated.

Arrived there, we ascended the stairs to a first floor drawing-room, rather spacious, and very comfortably, though not fashionably furnished;—a large round table stood in the middle of it, loaded with manuscript papers,—cards covered with diagrams,—old books, and what not. Phrenological busts of all sizes presented themselves here, there, and everywhere;—and over the chimney was an immense black board, on which was chalked a variety of strange hieroglyphics.

"Here is my dulce domum!" he exclaimed; "and one that I would not exchange for a throne!"

It *is* a throne, thought I, in your occupation; for you legislate from it, I'll undertake to say, in an absolute monarchy fashion.

"But now, Middleton," he continued, "Let us lose no time—*You* have no Mrs. Middleton, I hope, to produce?"

"None; I have never been married."

"Bravo, that's right!" and he hurra'd again—"You are just one of the men that I am in search of—You are to know, that although I do not take any active part in the concern myself, beyond the

organization of it, I have instituted a school under the direction of very able coadjutors, and based upon the liberal and enlightened plan of receiving scholars of all ages, and both sexes. All that we want is a sufficient fund, and the patronage of distinguished individuals, to make it eminently successful."

"Both are needful things to all projects that are to succeed," said I; taking a sheltered position in commonplace, from the assault I expected.

"You are a rich man, if I recollect rightly?"

"I have enough for my different purposes."

"Ah, but I must lay a new purpose before you. I must enlist you in the cause of moral regeneration."

"It is a great work," said I, smiling. "To mend the world's a vast design."

"I believe so indeed;—and a great privilege is it, to be a helper therein. Here! just read this prospectus. And stay;—let me give you a few to distribute amongst your friends!"—saying which, he gathered up a heap of papers from the table, of which I took a few, but alleged the inconvenience of disposing of the whole budget in my coat pocket.

The prospectus ran in this form;—

"At Sedley House

"Near M——, in Surrey,

'Mr. and Mrs. Neale beg to announce, that they eceive individuals of all ages, and both sexes, to

board and educate; devoting themselves, with the assistance of properly qualified instructors, to the developement in their pupils of the highest perfection both of mind and body of which they may be susceptible. Proceeding on the principle that there is a divine germ to be elicited from the soul by the culture of Love, and perfect health from the corporeal frame by the pursuit of a pure and simple diet, the most delicate attention towards the former on the part of philosophical minds, and a strictly vegetarian regimen as it respects the latter, will be the leading features in their scholastic administration. The fine arts of poetry, painting and music, will claim pre-eminent attention; while the abstruser subjects of the mathematics, algebra, geometry, and the dead languages, will not be forgotten. In a scheme which is based solely upon the principle of universal love and harmony, it is almost revolting to have to recur to pecuniary points. In the present stage of human affairs, it seems however, indispensable to be furnished with means of that description. It may suffice to say, that no terms sufficiently remunerative will be refused; and it is left, therefore, an open question, to be determined by the ability of parties themselves, as to what will constitute the annual payment of respective pupils.

"Further particulars may be obtained on application to J. Grey, Esq., No. ——, Carey St., Lincoln's Inn Fields; by whom, any aid to the

work, in the form of pecuniary contributions, will be thankfully received."

"I should fear whether a strictly vegetarian diet would be generally acceptable," said I, — not well knowing how to be sincere, and at the same time to avoid indicating the innate distaste I felt to the whole of the speculation.

"I dare say not," he replied; "but what does that signify?"

"Is it not important to avoid giving cause for dissatisfaction on the part of the students; especially on such a material point as their diet?"

"Pooh! their dissatisfaction indeed! They are to bring no opinions, no likes or dislikes of any kind whatever, with them. They are simply to present themselves as human beings, to be new moulded and new made altogether. They come, in short, to be ploughed and harrowed just like a field."

"I'm doubtful whether they will be altogether passive under that process though; particularly, if they should be past the age of pupilage, as it seems they may be, if the invitation contained here should be responded to."

"It *is* responded to,—we have several adult pupils already at Sedley House, and many children."

"And do they succumb to the vegetarian part of the matter very easily?"

"*Do* they succumb? I believe so, indeed.—I would not proceed for a moment in the concern,

till the important question of diet was settled. Do you suppose I could expect to be aiding the cause of moral developement in the human being who was an eater of flesh, or who was any thing on the subject of diet, but a most rigid disciplinarian?"

"Then you abstain yourself, I suppose, from animal food?"

"Decidedly. I have not touched it these ten years."

"But perhaps, you make up by allowing yourself some little delicacies in the way of puddings, pastry, jellies, soups, &c."

"Jellies, soups, &c.! No, no, I am not on that low ground of being. A few raisins, and a bit of bread, suffice for me. Indeed, I often forget to eat any dinner whatever; and I believe if the soul *were* purified to its proper degree of transcendentalism, we should very seldom, perhaps never, want to eat at all. But that of course, I cannot take upon me to affirm."

"There are but few things in human life and experience," said I, "on which we can venture to be entirely affirmative;—and certainly, that is not one of them."

"You quite mistake," said he, "as to your general proposition. With respect indeed to the particular case which you dismiss as undecidable, as it does not admit in our present condition, of more than a hypothesis, I would not agitate the question at all. In fact, I never deal with ques-

tions. I always plant my foot upon the ground which I can call mine, and maintain as mine, to the centre of the earth."

"You were always, if I recollect right, an affirmative man."

"Always. It is my pride and boast so to be. I never patter, patter upon the outside of the nut; I crack it at once, in order to see what it contains—maggots or meat; and when I have ascertained this point, I can predicate precisely, as to its availability for my purpose."

"Do you find many sound ones in the woods and wilds where you are now going a-nutting?"

"Plenty; the rarity is, to find an unsound one."

"To drop the metaphorical," said I, "do you mean that it is the exception, rather than the rule with you, to meet with discouraging subjects for your experiments in the work of moral regeneration?"

"Quite so."

"All I can say then, is, that your experience differs from mine; which is far from being of a kind to render me sanguine as to that point, unless indeed we could give domestic conditions as well as education, to those we desire to benefit."

"Not sanguine as to the moral regeneration of mankind!" he repeated; "and in such an age as this, too! Why, my dear sir, where have you been living; or rather, where have you been vegetating, not to perceive that it is the advent with us of a

new creation? Look at the marvels of steam, of mesmerism, of natural philosophy, of the diffusion of literature, the cultivation of the fine arts, the ——"

"Oh yes, yes; I am aware of all that," said I; "and appreciate it as it deserves. There can be no question of the advance of mankind in these directions. But it is a great question with me, and I should suppose with many more besides me, whether, in point of moral progress, the world is not pretty much where it was. Education may do wonders in respect to the interests of science, and for the improvement of the intellect; but what has it done these last hundred years, in rectifying the moral judgment, elevating the religious views, and sanctifying the lives of the greater part of those who have partaken of its advantages in the most beneficial and extended way? Are our young students at the universities better disciplined in self-controul than they were in past times?"

"I dare say they are," said he impatiently; "but that is not the question."

"Excuse me," said I, "but I think it is a great part of the question, whether the moral advancement of the human being has kept pace with his scientific and intellectual improvement. If we discover, as I rather believe we shall, on enquiry, that, under the aid of a liberal education, united to those favourable domestic conditions which, on the whole, prevail in properly regulated families in the

middle ranks of society; under the influence also of regular attendance at places of worship, and very frequently the daily observance of family devotion; in short, 'with all appliances and means to boot,' if we find that there is still pretty nearly as much private misery from misconduct, as much iniquity, and as much total disregard for truth and righteousness in this walk of life as ever there was, it should surely set us upon considering if the hope of regenerating the world is not a vain idea; more particularly when we cast a glance upon the mass of evil influences, which, from the necessities of their circumstances, must in the very nature of things neutralize almost every effort that can be made for the moral elevation of the lower classes."

"They must be put into other circumstances," said he. "They must be altogether new conditioned."

"Who is to do it?" I enquired. "Where are these moral legislators to come from?"

"From the divine men and women," he answered, "who have themselves passed through the process of moral purification."

"Do you know any such?" I asked.

"Yes; and so may you, if you will only take the trouble to go down and spend a day or two at Sedley House. There you will see what human nature *is* capable of becoming.—"

A gentle knock at the door here interrupted us, and availing myself of the opportunity it afforded

for a move, I rose to depart. But he would not hear of it till I had promised to renew my visit in the evening; when he said there would be a discussion on Diet, as a material element in moral progress, to be held by a miscellaneous party, who assembled once a week at each other's abode, to consult on subjects relative to universal happiness and perfection; and this evening it came to his turn to receive them.

"We take tea at seven," said he. "My landlady, Mrs. Sparks, manages all that; so it will be in her room that we meet, and after tea we adjourn here."

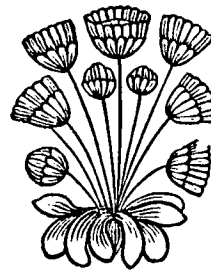
"Well, child, what is your message?" he exclaimed, as on opening the door, the maid of the house presented herself with something covered over with a handkerchief, which, by a glimpse I obtained of it, looked like a dainty pie of some sort.

"My mistress's best respects, sir, and has sent you a green gage ——"

"Ay ay; I know."

I hurried down stairs, in order to seem unconscious of this *contretems;* though, perforce, somewhat diverted at its occurrence. How little does time, that changes the mode of things, change their natures! thought I; as I pursued my way to my hotel in the Adelphi. How exactly, but that he has grown older and more dogmatical, here is the same man that, forty years ago, used to theorize and harangue to me, as we paced the causeway from Cambridge to Trumpington!

Having nothing better to occupy me, I decided to attend the evening's discussion, and to present myself at the tea-table of Mrs. Sparks, whom I felt already disposed to love, for her benevolence touching the green-gage pie.



CHAPTER VI.

A Discussion on Diet.

ON arriving at Carey Street, I was ushered into a parlour in which were assembled some ten or twelve persons, the greater part of whom were standing near Mr. Grey, and listening attentively, as, seated in an arm chair by the side of the fire, he was holding forth in great force.

My name being announced, he introduced me to Mrs. Sparks, a well-dressed, good looking woman, who was busily engaged in making tea, and clearly with quite too much business upon her hands to attend to anything else. As I could not, under existing circumstances, hope for the pleasure of making her acquaintance, I sat silent, and observant of the rest of the company.

They consisted chiefly of young persons, with a preponderance of what is poetically called the nobler sex; for there were not more than two ladies present, with the exception of Mrs. Sparks, who appeared to pass for nobody but a tea maker,

in which occupation she grew so very hot, and visibly anxious, that I thought it would be but humane to inquire if I could be of any use to her.

"No, thank you, sir; I shall do very well. Mary is coming with the cake and bread and butter directly, and I hope every body will make a good tea; I am sure it's my desire they should."

This is a noble minded woman, thought I, remembering the green gage tart, and putting this and that together, greatly to the advantage of her liberality, though with a little doubt as to what ground she occupied on the diet question.

"When people pay, you know, sir," and she dropped her voice to a confidential whisper, "they expect their full pennyworth for their penny; and I always take care they shall get it with me."

Here was quite a new aspect of affairs, the influence of which I would freely have given a sovereign to have escaped from; for, amongst the thousand and one small miseries of human life, I do think the having to give, "*What you please, sir*," especially upon occasions wherein you were not aware that you would be expected to give any thing, is about one of the most teazing. One never knows how to hit the mark, and is almost certain of being overwhelmed with confusion, under an idea of being thought niggardly, let the donation have been what it may. I sat nervously revolving in my mind how upon earth I should manage this point; sometimes tempted to lay down half-a-crown on the tea-tray, and run away; and then writhing inwardly with a

doubt whether it should not be five shillings. Perhaps this is the way in which some of the funds for Sedley House are raised, thought I; and then there is no saying what kind of an *ad libitum* contribution would be expected from me.

In the mean while, the tea drinking with its accompaniment of eating, went on with amazing briskness. Unquestionably, the ladies and gentlemen, as good Mrs. Sparks had intimated, seemed as though they intended to have their full pennyworth for their penny, whatever that valuation might be; Mr. Grey, as well as the rest, doing valiant execution amongst the cakes and bread and butter.

At length things came to a conclusion, and my mind was relieved of its difficulties by the appearance of Mary with a little waiter in her hand, which she presented to each person, beginning, to my dismay, with me.

There was no alternative but to smile, and turning to Mrs. Sparks, by whom I was sitting, to say, "I am a stranger, you must tell me, if you please '

"O dear to be sure; I quite forgot you were a stranger, sir; sixpence a-piece for tea is paid on these occasions."

The peace of mind I experienced at the settlement of the matter would have been cheap at six pounds; and prepared now for what came next, I followed the rest of the party up stairs.

"Now, Mr. White, will you be kind enough to

give us our evening's subject," said Mr. Grey, as soon as we were seated. Upon which a gentleman (who Mrs. Sparks informed me in a whisper, was the editor of a weekly periodical) chalked upon the black board over the chimney-piece, in letters sufficiently large to make it intelligible to every body in the room, the following sentence:—

"What is the diet which nature herself points out as most conducive to the moral benefit of the human race?"

This done, there was a short pause; not from any doubt as to who was to begin the discussion, for, that Mr. Grey was to take the initiative, every body knew; but apparently to give him time to consider his exordium, of which I only recollect the first sentence, which ran in this fashion:—

"In this nineteenth century of the Christian era, when man begins to feel his powers, and to catch a glimpse of the dignity of his calling; when he takes the measure, so to speak, of the universe, and is able to appreciate within the twentieth part of a hair's breadth, the nature of most of the things with which he has to deal,—it is an anomaly, an incongruity unheard of, and altogether in-con-cei-va-ble, that he should have almost every thing to learn relative to an act in which he is necessarily more often engaged than in any other, and the consequences of which are of more direct importance to him than language can express.—That act, I need not say, is the act of eating."

A loud and long continued cheer here broke forth from the assembly; during which, having observed the two ladies to be earnestly engaged in taking notes, the pencil and paper for which had been ready before Mr. Grey uttered a word, I took the opportunity to inquire in a whisper, of my friend Mrs. Sparks, who they were.

"The elder lady," said she, "is Mrs. Dawsey, who writes all the droll things in Mr. White's paper, and the younger one is Miss Simpson, who furnishes those beautiful love stories in the first two or three pages. You have read and admired them, I dare say, sir?"

I was obliged to plead ignorance on this point.

"Dear me! I should be very glad to lend you some of the numbers, sir."

A polite offer, for which, I hope, I evinced all becoming gratitude.

Mr. Grey, after going on with his opening address for some time, at length brought it to a conclusion. The company were then invited to ask any questions, or state any objections, relative to what he had advanced.

After a short and awkward silence, a few doubts as to the tenability of some of his propositions were expressed by a young man, who Mrs. Sparks informed me was a new guest like myself. "Where Mr. Grey picked him up I don't know," said she, "but I am sure he will never be here again, if he

does not take care what he is about; for Mr. Grey does not stand any contradiction."

"I thought the discussion was for the sake of eliciting different opinions," said I.

She smiled as she replied, "They don't differ much from Mr. Grey that come here."

"If I understand you right," said this disputatious gentleman, in answer to a very startling affirmation on the part of Mr. Grey, "you enunciate this proposition: — that all sorts of food having their simile or duplicate in the nature of man, he becomes just that kind of being which the nature of his diet is fitted to make him; — that is to say, bread and vegetables being of a mild, simple kind, by living on them, he also becomes mild and simple?"

"Unquestionably," said Mr. Grey, "just as by eating flesh he becomes of the nature of the animal he devours."

"Sheepish for mutton, I suppose, calvish for veal, and so on."

"You have yourself been probably dining off veal to-day, sir," said Mr. Grey; — a witticism which elicited a general laugh, in which the individual at whom it was levelled, joined as heartily as the rest. There was a simplicity and disengagement from himself, together with an urbanity of manner about him, that prevented his opposition to Mr. Grey from wearing anything of a rough or self-opinionated character. It was difficult, to be

sure, to know exactly what he was driving at in the discussion; for that he cared much about it in a philosophical point of view, the arch drollery of his look and manner totally denied. I could not help fancying that he was a clever young man whom Mr. Grey was desirous of making useful to him in his projects, and on which account he had brought him there. Be this as it might, he was evidently cautious of giving full vent to his ire in dealing with this young gentleman, for he had no sooner uttered his last remark than he began to apologize for it.

"I keep forgetting that you are unacquainted with the subject, Mr. Hartley," said he, "and that must plead my excuse for so much abruptness."

Mr. Hartley hereupon begged he would not mention it. "Go on, I beg of you, sir," said he; "I am greatly interested in what you say, though, of course, you cannot expect me to be a convert all at once. Think of the martyrdom it involves! Think of having to forego all the nice things from Fortnum and Mason's;—think of the renunciation of perigord pie! Oh! Mr. Grey, one must surely be transformed into the most exquisite thing in creation, after partaking of a perigord pie!"

"No, no," said I, wholly incapable of agreeing to this. "On the contrary, if there be a case in which a man might tremble to swallow a particular

food for fear of its being the means of retributive justice, I do think the making himself a party to the lengthened horrors, the unspeakable tortures, whereby the livers of poor geese are expanded and graduated into a meetness for perigord pie, is most unmistakeably such a one."

"Oh, one must not think of that," said Mr. Hartley; "the geese are dead, you know, when you eat of their livers."

"But you eat, sir, of all the torture which the poor creatures have endured before they died," said Mr. Grey.

"According to that," said Mr. Hartley, "you eat of the tortures of every other animal that comes to your table; for I suppose, as it respects both man and beast, there is no being killed in any way that does not involve some degree of torture."

"Of course there is not; and what, I would ask you, is the nature of the sensations that are elicited in the animal by torture?"

"Extreme pain, I suppose."

"Extreme pain, sir! Much more than that;—extreme rage,—extreme hatred! The animal that is undergoing the act of slaughter would tear his destroyer to atoms if he could."

"And not to be blamed neither," said Mr. White.

"I'm sure I would if I could," agreed both of the literary ladies.

"But when he *is* slaughtered, and his rage, to-

gether with his pain and every other sensation is ended," said I, "I am at a loss to know what influence he can diffuse over the minds of those that eat him."

"Just the influence of the state in which he departed from this modification of being," replied Mr. Grey. "A creature that dies in an excited, infuriated state, dies with his blood and juices in a highly fermented, unwholesome condition; a condition of which his flesh necessarily partakes."

Here a signal from Mr. White put the pencils of the ladies in great requisition, possibly for the benefit of the metaphysical page of his periodical. In fact, Mr. Grey's was not an unprofitable manor to poach upon; for though it boasted but little in the way of common sense, it was affluent in the extravaganza line, and in those startling hypotheses which are always available property when nothing but what is new and strange is called for in the literary market.

"But though all slaughtered animals should die in this highly-infuriated condition, and their flesh be imbued with a tincture of it," said I, "does it follow as a necessary consequence that those who eat of it shall also become in the same infuriated and excited state?"

"It is not a necessary consequence that they should bellow and tear like a dying ox," he replied. "It would be well if it were, for then an end would be put to the practice of eating flesh al-

together, and man would be no longer the carnivorous animal that he is. But results in this case are not so promptly manifest; for the influence of food is gradual, silent, and small, like the influence of dew upon the ground; and in this way, there can be no question, that an animal diet nurtures and developes the animal qualities of the human being, and his irascible propensities, probably, more than any other; because, as I have already said, of the strong essence of rage with which the flesh of the murdered brute on which the man feeds is tinctured."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Hartley, "you would kindly tell us, Mr. Grey, what diet you consider to be the best fitted to promote us in the scale of moral being?"

"Tell us your own plan," said I; "because you can back that with the test of experience."

"Oh, as for plan, I have none. I live like the birds, 'on nature's common bounty fed.'"

"And Mrs. Sparks's—" I had all but added, with a reminiscence of the green-gage tart.

"But for your breakfast, sir," said Mr. Hartley, "what do you begin the day with?"

"A cup of coffee and a biscuit. Will that do for you?" and he turned rather angrily with a request to Mr. White to do something to the lamp.

It was plain that he did not fancy this sort of cross questioning;—and Mr. Hartley perceiving that he was at fault, said good-humouredly, "Well

I wont proceed in my queries. There is no doubt of your understanding experimentally, the full value of a simple, vegetarian diet."

"I hope I do," he replied. "But we don't meet upon these occasions, to bring things to the little poor personalities of what *I*, or what *you* do. We go upon the broad fundamental ground of what is to be done for the general good. Now, it is for the general good, that man should be renovated in his moral being;—and as a means thereto, the nature of his food demands primary consideration. It is not what *I* eat or drink that affects that view of the subject."

"Of course not," said Mr. White, and the ladies, and most of the party.

"But, as you profess to desire a specific statement respecting diet," he proceeded, addressing Mr. Hartley,—"I will get Mr. White to read you a few hints on that point, from this little book,"—and he took one from the table. "Here, sir," said he, "is a treatise that would be cheap at its weight in gold; but which I bought last week at a book-stall, for sixpence. Begin there, if you please," and he put it in the hand of Mr. White, who seemed well pleased to be promoted to a more active part in the evening's entertainment.

"Bread and water," said this oracle of a book, "have the first place of all foods, and are the foundation of dry and moist nourishment; and of themselves, being wisely prepared, make a good

repast of a fine, clean, purifying nature and operation. For the concocting of these primitive elements into a pleasant variety, we will give a few receipts;—and for the first;—Take water, and good wheat flour, and make it into a paste, and put bread into it, and season it with salt;—this, with a glass of water and a crust of bread, a man may live very cheerily upon, as a friend of mine hath done, the last two years."

"Are you sure it's '*cheerily?*'" said Mr. Hartley.

Mr. White looked earnestly at the book;—"Yes,—the word is 'cheerily.'"

"I thought it sounded like 'drearily,'" said the other, looking so doleful, that, whether they would or not, the company were constrained to smile;—Mrs. Sparks even laughing out.

"Go on, sir, if you please," said Mr. Grey; and the reader proceeded to the next of these invaluable receipts.

"Bread and butter, eaten with thin gruel, wherein is only salt to season it, is a most sweet and agreeable food to the stomach, and of easy concoction. It produces good blood, and causes it to circulate freely,—and, N. B.—the best way of eating it is to bite and sup alternately, just as you eat raw milk and bread."

"And a very sensible N. B. too," said Mr. Grey.—"For it is not only the quality and quantity of their food that the greater part of people want to

have prescribed for them, but the best way of eating it. Only to see the way in which some persons suss! suss! over their victuals, like a herd of swine!"

"So they do, sir," said Mr. Hartley—"It is perfectly hateful. They want nothing but a trough (which they ought to have) to complete the resemblance."

"Now when they are taught to eat and drink alternately," said Mr. Grey, "and gently,—a bit of bread and butter and a sup of gruel,—a bit, and a sup" (suiting the action to the word with the most ludicrous solemnity) "this ravening of nature is curbed as it ought to be, and the eating man presents himself to a philosophical observer of the species, *as* a man, and not as a hog."

"Supposing the philosopher to consider a man at his meals to be in the most favourable position for observation," said I;—"but I should have imagined the reverse."

"You are quite mistaken," said he. "In no act that he performs, does a man so entirely betray his nature, as in the act of eating. Let me see a man eat, and I will tell you as confidently as I can tell you that two and two make four,—what manner of man he is."

"Mr. Grey means when the man is perfectly at his ease, unfettered by conventional observances, and arrangements," said Mr. White.

"Of course," said he,—"I don't mean that the

philosopher is to take his gauge from the way in which people coquet with what is put upon their plates at an aristocratic dinner table;—fiddle fadling with it at the end of their silver prong, as though they expected it would eat *them*. But see the man at his breakfast or luncheon, when he is hungry, and means to eat; and then you see him under the same circumstances as you see the lions and tigers at feeding time at the Zoological Gardens; and, but that they do not use knives and forks, and dishes, and plates, I think the beasts, on the whole, have the advantage of it; at all events, they are satisfied with one thing, which the man very seldom is."

Had I been alone with my old friend, and could I have hoped to keep him sufficiently calm and reasonable to talk with me in a way that would have admitted of my stating my objections to the extremes and exaggerations with which he damaged what of good there might be in his views, I should very well have liked to have gone further into a matter, on which I think, he had something forcible to say. But, under present circumstances, I had had enough of it; and was making a move to go, when he begged of Mr. White, before he laid the book down, just to read a paragraph to which he pointed, and to listen to which, I resumed my seat. It was as follows;

"Behold the whole of created being with the eyes of thine understanding, and then thou wilt

perceive that there is good and evil in all animals, vegetables and minerals. Also that sweet and sour, light and darkness, heaven and hell, are two great sources which do continually contend in each thing and creature, for victory; but since the fall of angels and men, the evil principle hath gotten the dominion, whereby it doth greatly hide and imprison the better part in each creature and thing.

"Seeing then that things be so, how necessary is it for men to join with and choose those things that are most simple and innocent, and freest from the fierce, evil qualities in meats, in drinks, in words, in works;—because the essences of all things do, in a secret and most powerful way, incorporate themselves with human nature, and awake in it their own prevailing likeness."*

"We shall not have anything better than that to-night," said Mr. Grey; a remark which, as I suppose it was intended to do, sent the company gradually off, till only Mrs. Sparks, Mr. Hartley, and myself remained with him. I was just about bidding him good night, but he begged me to remain whilst he proposed a project to which he hoped I should make no objection. It was to accompany Mr. Hartley down to Sedley House the next day.

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* Aphorisms of Thomas Tryon. Student in Physick, 1696.

As it seemed hardly kind to attempt an escape from this visit, I assented to his proposal; and it was settled that Mr. Hartley should call for me the next day by nine o'clock, and we would proceed together to the rail-road, by which we were to travel about fifteen miles to Sedley House. Mr. Grey excused himself from accompanying us, on the ground of the pupils always showing to more advantage when he was not present.

"They imagine when I am there, that they have some great Fee Faw Fum before them," said he, "and are altogether overpowered. But Mr. Hartley will introduce you to every body; he knows them all."

"My father lives within three miles of Sedley House," said Mr. Hartley, "and I hope I shall prevail on Mr. Middleton to take a dinner with him."

"Well, that you can settle between yourselves," said Mr. Grey. "In the mean while, let me see you on your return," addressing himself to me.

I promised that he should hear from me, but I doubted if my other arrangements would admit of my making him another visit.

"Oh, when you have seen Sedley House," he replied, "I expect we shall have more than one occasion for another meeting."

I kept my thoughts upon this point to myself, and took my leave, accompanied by Mr. Hartley, who walked with me to my hotel.

On my asking him if he were not a new visitor

at these meetings, he replied that it was his first visit to Mr. Grey at Carey Street, but that he had made his acquaintance some weeks before, when he was down at Sedley House, instituting and organizing his school.

"The house his agents occupy," said he, "belongs to a gentleman who is abroad; and as my father has the letting of it, we were brought frequently into contact with Mr. Grey and his subordinates."

"And are you really interested in these crotchets of his, about regenerating the world?" said I. "Do you sincerely desire to participate in his notions and practice with respect to becoming a vegetarian?"

"I am really amused and interested in the old man's conversation," he replied, "and often pick up something from him that I can benefit by. But I do not go to the extreme length he does upon all subjects; and, most undoubtedly, I don't mean to live upon bread and butter and water-gruel; neither, I suspect, do any of those who were there to-night."

"The misfortune of all theorizers," said I, "is to set up something which is to fit every case, and be the *summum bonum* for every body. Now, when we consider the mixed nature of all earthly things, their endless variations and gradations, and the continual strife of good and evil in which, from the law of their being they must act, we soon see that no such universal rule can hold."

"What vexes me the most in Mr. Grey's case," said Mr. Hartley, "is his confining himself to such a queer, low set of people, who flatter and cajole him just for their own purposes, and thus totally prevent his hearing those useful truths, which better informed persons in his own rank of life might set before him."

I did not tell my new acquaintance that I thought there must have been an inconceivable alteration in Mr. Grey since I first knew him, if he would hear useful truths from any body living; but I asked him "what purposes these people could have to serve in toadying an old man, who, as far as I knew anything of his affairs, had no influence in high quarters, and no more money than he absolutely wanted for his own use."

"Oh, you are mistaken," said he. "There are two old single ladies somewhere at the west end, of very singular views, who are extremely rich, and have taken such a fancy to him and his hypotheses, and more particularly with respect to this school, that they have furnished nearly all the funds with which it has been established. And it is in hope, I have no doubt, of sharing in their spoils in some way or another, that these detachments of needy people come about him."

"What kind of people are the functionaries at Sedley House?" said I.

"A very presuming and self-satisfied, but a very ignorant set, to judge from their lectures and expositions."

"They lecture, then, as well as Mr. Grey?"

"Yes; you have Mr. Grey there at second hand, and a miserable imitation of him they give."

This account of matters did not tend to remove the extreme unwillingness I felt for the excursion. But it came in the order of things, which, commonly speaking, one seldom does amiss to follow; besides which, I was sufficiently interested in my new acquaintance to wish to see a little more of him.

Promising to be with me punctually at the appointed hour the next morning, he left me at the door of my hotel.

CHAPTER VII.

A Model School.

IN our walk from the rail-road to Sedley House on the following day, I endeavoured to draw from Mr. Hartley a more definite account respecting the authorities of the school than he gave me on the preceding evening.

"It passes as being under the superintendence of Mr. and Mrs. Neale," said he; "but Mr. Grey is the real master, and supreme authority there. Everything is regulated by his direction; and, once in two or three weeks, he goes down for a few days to see how matters are proceeding. As for Mr. Neale, he is a young man of scarcely thirty, with some cleverness about him, and a good deal of conceit. I have heard that he was a shopman at a linen draper's somewhere in the Borough, and getting introduced to Mr. Grey, he contrived so well to adopt his theories and humour his fancies, that he obtained from him his present post of distinction. His wife is a mere nobody; but having discretion

enough to hold her tongue, and a considerable degree of that confidence in which few of Mr. Grey's disciples are wanting, she does her part to help the thing off much better than you might expect, from a woman who, I believe there is no doubt was, before her marriage, what they call an upholstress, or worker for the upholsterers."

"But where does Mr. Grey meet with this sort of people?"

"They get somehow or another to his lectures, and being persons of that kind of grave self-complacency and assumption of knowingness which often look like talents, he takes it for granted that they possess what they pretend to, and makes what use of them he can. Besides Mr. and Mrs. Neale, there is a Mr. Dobson, a young man who takes the mathematical, and the Hebrew, Latin and Greek department; which languages he is about as competent to teach, I take it, as one of the ducks in yonder pond."

"But surely this ignorance must be known to Mr. Grey?"

"It *is* known to him, but he winks at it. Mr. Grey, you must be aware, is one of those people, who, when he designs to carry his point, sees nothing but what is favourable to it. He knows well enough that the more splash he makes in his prospectus the more people will stare; and as it takes but little to mystify them in things they don't understand, when he shows up Mr. Dobson as one of

the instructors therein alluded to, and as occupying the dead language and mathematical department in the school, how are they to test his tutor's acquirements and discover his ignorance?"

"Why, a scholar might happen to come in his way and ask a few awkward questions; and what would he do then?"

"He would 'put forth all his little store' to the best advantage he could; for Mr. Grey has stocked him with a little capital in the language line, by putting him under an old Jew for the Hebrew, and giving him a smattering of Greek and Latin and mathematics himself. And really, with the aid of a good deal of cool assurance, he does the erudition part in a fine mock-majesty fashion."

"And had he no better occupation to follow, that he must come and play the simpleton here?"

"I fancy he has been what they call 'unfortunate in business;' and as such people are generally very idle, I suppose he preferred the comparative ease of his present situation, to the trouble of beginning and making fresh efforts where he failed before. His wife too, was just wild to come here, and be made into a 'divine woman.'"

"There is a Mrs. Dobson, then?"

"Indeed is there, and two Master Dobsons also; and the whole family party are domiciled at Sedley House; the young gentlemen, if I am rightly informed, at the expense of the Miss Dents, the two old ladies I mentioned to you last night as being

greatly interested in the school. Mrs. Dobson is herself a student in the establishment; but occupying also the position of a superintendent jointly with Mrs. Neale. Who or what she is by birth and education, I know not; but clearly, something of a very ordinary stamp; too ordinary, indeed, for her to put up with. Somebody, in an ill-fated hour, took her to Mr. Grey's lectures, and from that moment 'My eyes were opened,' she said to me, 'and having beheld the dignity to which the human being is called by his destiny, I could no longer resist the summons.' Poor soul! she had better have been summoned to keep an apple stall; for she might possibly have made that a lucrative employment; but her vocation of a literary lady, I doubt, will prove as barren of lucre as of laurels. However, such as she is, Mr. Grey thinks himself rich in the acquisition of her, and although, as I have said, she is in some measure a pupil herself, she exercises so potent a dominion in the school room, that you will undoubtedly see some demonstration or another from her, before you go. I hope I shall behave well, for she generally sets me laughing."

"I should not have thought by your description, that she was much given to be jocose."

"Far from it. Indeed, I don't recollect to have ever seen her smile. It is the ponderous gravity with which she sets herself to the business of seeming to be clever, and the curious obtuseness of un-

derstanding with which she thinks that genius is a something that may be learned like reading and writing, that provoke my risibility."

"There is a perseverance in stupidity, as some writer remarks, but I forget who," said I, "which, like the butterfly trying to get through a glass-window, perceives not the fruitlessness of its efforts."

"That's exactly the case here," said he. "All the senior pupils (of which there are, besides Mrs. Dobson, some six or eight young women) are persons of deficient education, who, being caught by the novelty of view which the prospectus exhibits, expect to be new made, and well made, by some sort of patent process recently discovered with other inventions."

"They are most of them, I suppose, persons who intend to go out as governesses, or something of that kind?"

"Yes, chiefly so."

"And of what kind are the youngest pupils;—from what rank of life do they come?"

"I believe they are, for the most part, protégés of the Miss Dents. But see," and he pointed to a house which, by turning a sharp corner in the road, we came upon rather suddenly; "here we are!"

It looked spacious and mansion-like; and being well situated near M——, one of the most beautiful localities in Surrey, the first impression it imparted was decidedly favourable: but it soon eva-

porated on entering the grounds, which, with their neglected gravel walks, long grass, and broken palings, betokened either want of funds, or want of care in those who had the charge of such a really lovely residence.

"My father is much dissatisfied with their want of attention in keeping up the place properly," said Mr. Hartley; "but when he speaks of it, they smile superciliously and say these are minor matters which the gardener will attend to in due time. In the meanwhile no gardener ever appears; but two or three of the school boys, who don't know a hawk from a hand-saw, pretend now and then to pass an hour or two about the grounds,—all the time doing more harm than good."

Our knock at the door was answered by a slipshod girl, who, as she opened it, wiped her hands with her apron, and whose pail, from which they had probably just been taken, stood ready for us to tumble over in the hall. We were shown into a parlour, and after waiting there a pretty long time, Mr. Neale made his appearance, clad in a long grey flannel reading coat, and with his hair most elaborately arranged and Macassared. He was almost immediately followed by his lady and another long-grey-coated gentleman, of a very sinister expression of countenance, whom he introduced to me as Mr. Dobson, "the gentleman," he said, "who superintended the dead language and mathematical department of the school;" and of

whose acquirements as a linguist I had just had an account.

"You are now, I suppose, engaged in your morning lecture," said Mr. Hartley; "if so, may we accompany you to the school-room, as Mr. Grey wished his friend Mr. Middleton, to see as much of your usual routine as possible?"

"This is not one of our lecture days," replied Mr. Neale; "but we have a discussion on the use and influence of the imaginative faculties, and we are just upon the point of commencing that. You will follow me if you please."

In our passage across a court-yard to the school-room at the back of the premises, I said a few words by way of introducing myself to Mrs. Neale; but she answered me with such stiff, cold monosyllables, that the task was too heavy to go on with, and I tried Mr. Dobson with some queries as to the hours of study, &c. He was more communicative, but not more urbane than the lady. The whole group, indeed, seemed to have entrenched themselves in a certain pompous reserve, which, being a potent shield against sudden and unexpected attacks, I have generally found adopted by feeble people, when put into circumstances for which they know themselves to be insufficient; and which realizes aptly enough the line of Hudibras,

"Fools are known by looking wise."

On entering the school room, a scene of great

stillness and order presented itself. The number of the pupils was about twenty; eight of them consisting of young women, and the others were boys and girls from about seven to twelve years of age. I observed that they neither rose nor exhibited any sort of reverence as we entered, but kept their seats and their different employments with a nonchalance which I soon discovered to be a remarkable feature in the aspect of the school. Indeed, the arrogant, dogmatical spirit of Mr. Grey was to be traced, as imbuing in a most amusing manner, not only his functionaries, but the pupils also.

"Arrange now," said Mr. Neale, "for the exposition; and, Mrs. Dobson, will you read the portion to be discussed?"

Upon this, a young woman stepped forward, and with the most perfect self-possession, having seated herself at a little table at the head of the room, desired one of the children to fetch her a certain book. She seemed to be about eight-and-twenty years of age, and of a dull, heavy, inexpressive face.

"I think we will vary our subject to-day," said Mr. Neale. "Miss Emily Dent has sent me this charming little book,"—taking one from his pocket, —"and on looking it over last night, I fell upon a most enchanting passage, and one which I think will form an excellent basis for our exposition. The work is called * * * * *" (the reader will excuse my specifying the title, as it rather proved a failure with us) "and the passage we will discuss

is, as the beautiful illustration designates it, 'the hour of inspiration.'

"But first, for the sake of the little ones, I must just give a sketch of the heroine's character.

"Alice Tyne, the heroine of this delightful tale, was, from her birth, a most remarkable child;—remarkable I mean, in this way, that she did not turn her thoughts, as I grieve to say some little boys and girls do, to eating and drinking;—no, she disdained such low pursuits."

"Augustus Frederic, and you, Arthur Wellington, pray attend to this," said Mrs. Dobson to two little boys, whom this address of course identified as the Masters Dobson.

"It was the habit of this dear intellectual child," continued Mr. Neale, speaking in so slow and measured a way, that his words might without any difficulty have been counted as he delivered them, "it was her habit, I say, instead of talking about sugar-plums, brandy-balls, and what not of such ignoble trash, to talk with her own thoughts."

"They might have run in the sugar-plum track, for what we know," whispered Mr. Hartley, who occupied a chair by my side, fortunately behind Mr. Neale; for had that gentleman beheld the grotesque expression of his face, I think he must have thrown up his brief at the very outset of the cause. But we were well sheltered from his observation; and Mr. Neale standing in the middle of the room, as a man should do, who makes an

oration, went on with his subject, in the most happy unconsciousness that he was affording any materials for a jest.

"It was on one occasion of these self-communings," proceeded he, "that—that—but I believe now, Mrs. Dobson, you may, if you please, take up the subject. You will begin here;" and he handed her the book, from which, after a little affected "ahem!" by way of clearing her throat, and an uplifting of her eyes to the ceiling, she read the following passage, which I am enabled to give literally, Mr. Hartley having afterwards begged a copy of it.

"'Alice, as was much her habit, had run on before—'"

"She is taking an evening walk, you are to observe," said Mr. Neale.

"'—so as to be by herself, leaving Tom with Sara and the baby, to follow more at leisure.'

"She loved to be alone," observed Mrs. Dobson, raising her eyes once more to the ceiling as she added, "and oh, how sweet is solitude!"

"Oh Solitude! where are the charms which sages have seen in thy face?" said Mr. Hartley aloud, laying his hand upon his heart, and looking as rueful as Juan Fernandez himself might have done in his desert island.

Mr. Neale, who still occupied his standing position, here turned round, and seemed for a moment to be doubtful as to how he should take the inter-

ruption; but he soon smiled and said, "Oh, Mr. Hartley, you are a privileged person."

I quite believe there was not a member of the establishment who recognised the quotation. Mrs. Dobson certainly did not, for she repeated it with —"Yes, Mr. Hartley, *as you say*, 'Oh Solitude, where are the charms which sages have seen in thy face?'"

"Go on," said Mr. Dobson, gruffly, rather more than guessing, I suspect, what Mr. Hartley was about.

"'She had reached the middle of an upland field, across which were stretched a few rude posts with transverse pieces, to divide a plot of rich high grass from one cropped by browsing cattle.'"

"'Cropped by browsing cattle!'" said Mr. Neale, "what a graphic image!"

"It is indeed," said Mrs. Dobson, "a truly graphic image!"

"Go on!" again growled Mr. Dobson.

"'Tom and Sara were as yet some way off in another field, having not yet crossed the intervening stile. Alice reached these posts across the richer grass and then stood still.'"

Here Mrs. Dobson also paused for a few moments to give effect to the passage.

"'Alice, as it were, involuntarily stood still, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, till all at once, looking full on the great blazing glory of the sun, some swathement of her intellect or soul seemed burst—'"

"Excuse me," said Mr. Hartley.

Mrs. Dobson stopped.

"I am sorry to interrupt you, but I don't exactly catch the idea."

"The idea is very plain, sir, I think;—'some swathement of her intellect or soul seemed burst.'"

"Oddly expressed, I think, don't you?" and he turned to me.

"We had better hear the passage to the end," said I.

Mrs. Dobson went on: "'Great thoughts ran through the fibres of her brain;—her heart throbbed, stood still, yet throbbed again;—the power of richest utterance seemed in a moment impressed upon her lips; and perfectly unconscious of all else, above, around, beneath, remote or near, in words the sweetest of our mother tongue,—not picked out, not giving expression to any one idea begun and ended, but rather as it were a rich note picked out here and there from some great symphony begun long, long ago and not yet ended, by a master hand,—stray tints from a massive eastern cloud—like flowers plucked far and wide, the daisies and the buttercups of some vast dewy mead, stretched miles and miles away amid dim hills,—like sweetest voices from a countless throng, like a few pearls from out the riches of their ocean bed,—like, in a word, the smallest scattered mists of a mighty whole, these words bore out but broken fragments of the over-crowding thoughts which, like a new-burst fountain, filled the soul.'"

"Oh," whispered, or rather groaned, Mr. Hartley, "aint you choked, Mr. Middleton?"

"Almost," I replied.

"'On these words went,'" proceeded Mrs. Dobson, "'and the large fixed eyes outwardly blind, looked on the setting sun, but saw not. And of this, and for this, there had been no preparation but an hitherto struggling, blind, groping power, brought into being and to life, as it were by a glance of the Divine. Yes, the first dull outer crust was burst!'—

"'The first dull outer crust was burst!'" repeated Mrs. Dobson, making a solemn pause and again looking up at the ceiling.

"And when the pie was open'd the bird began to sing," whispered Mr. Hartley.

"'The power to articulate and create was born. Something said, You are a *Poet*, though it may not be one of jingle or of rhyme; but in the acts and deeds of men you, child, will recognise *a universal spirit*, and a sovereign *harmony of nature*, and help on the truth of both by your own acts and words.'"

A scarcely-suppressed groan here broke from Mr. Hartley, in which, truth to say, I found it difficult to forbear uniting.

The sense of the pupils was now to be taken on the subject, beginning with the young ones.

"Now, Augustus Frederic, and Arthur Wellington, come here," said Mrs. Dobson, "and de-

scribe to me how you have been feeling while I was reading the experience of this divinely-gifted child."

The boys, looking at each other as sheepish and silly as possible, half laughing and wholly bewildered, moved neither hand nor foot, till their father, in a voice that they were evidently accustomed to mind, desired them to do as they were bid.

They were slowly moving forward, but Mr. Neale, probably apprehending something preposterous, put them back, observing with a bland smile, that nothing was to be done by compulsion at Sedley House: "our only law here," said he, "is the law of love." After a few minutes' private talk with Mr. Dobson, he turned to the pupils and said, "If any little girl has any thing to say as to what she was feeling or thinking while Mrs. Dobson was reading to us, we shall be pleased to hear it."

Hereupon there was a manifest stir and excitement among the female children, and —"do you," and "do you," was whispered from one to another. At last a little girl of about nine years old, very pretty and very affected, curled and flounced, and evidently got up as the show Miss of the party, came forward and took her place at Mrs. Dobson's table. But that lady had not yet got over the recusancy of Augustus Frederic and Arthur Wellington, and crossly enough, sent her to be examined by Mr. Neale.

"There's a screw loose somewhere in the law of love," whispered Mr. Hartley.

"Well, dear child," said Mr. Neale, "tell us now exactly your thoughts and feelings. Don't mind what words you express them in; only give us your exact ideas and impressions respecting Alice Tyne."

After a little mincing, and wriggling, and giggling, she set off in her "childish treble" of a voice, which, sounding as if it came out of a musical snuff box that had lost all its notes but a shrill A in *alt*, made the examination inexpressibly ridiculous.

"Alice Tyne," said she, "was a dear, delightful little girl, that took a walk one evening ——"

Here there was rather a long pause.

"Yes, she took a walk one evening," said Mr. Neale; "and then"—

"And then,"—another pause.

"Well, what happened then?"—Still there was a pause.

"Perhaps some of our little friends can assist us," said Mr. Neale, turning to the other children.

"She came to some rude posts," said one of the boys.

"Oh yes, she came to some rude posts," went on the little Miss, "cropped by browsing cattle."

"Hard provender," whispered Mr. Hartley.

"Posts cropped by cattle!" said Mr. Neale, "think again, my dear. Do you know what cropped means?"

"My hair is cropped," said a boy; at which playful sally, there was a pretty general laugh.

"She came to some rude posts," said the little girl in a tone of despair, and half inclined to cry.

"And there she stood still," said Mr. Neale.

"Oh yes, she stood still; and I thought — I felt ——"

"Well, don't be afraid to tell us," said Mr. Neale, encouragingly; "you thought — and you felt ——"

"Yes, I thought—and I felt that she was quite" —here there was a considerable hiatus in the exposition of her emotions.

"'That she was quite'—what?"

"Quite a graphic image!"

"Bravo!" said Mr. Hartley, laughing aloud and clapping his hands.

Mr. Dobson looked daggers; but Mr. Neale only smiled, and patting the child's head, he dismissed her with a remark, that she felt more deeply and justly than she was yet able to define. Then addressing the elder pupils, he invited them to express their ideas on the subject. But they had looked too long and too keenly upon Mr. Hartley, to venture upon any kind of demonstration in his presence. They, one and all, declined the invitation; and Mr. Neale having looked at his watch, said that the hour for recess was come; which I found to mean that, at twelve o'clock the pupils were dismissed for an hour to the play-ground.

I felt greatly relieved in coming to the conclusion of all this mummery; which, in respect to the object aimed at, was too painful to admit of the laughter that on a less serious subject than that of education, its extreme absurdity would have rendered a legitimate tribute.

I quite languished to get away; hoping to find in the family of Mr. Hartley (to whom he was to introduce me), something real, something refreshing, and which would help to dissipate the burden that, as a night-mare, the proceedings of the morning had left upon my spirit. But Mr. Hartley, whose roguish turn for fun seemed to revel in the absurdities which created a kind of nausea in me, had too much to say to Mrs. Dobson and the ladies in general, to admit of his being as prompt as I wished him to be, in making a retreat.

"I know, Mr. Hartley, that *you* are a poet," said Mrs. Dobson; "I must ask you, therefore, to inscribe your name, with a few tributary lines, in the new album which Miss Dent has so kindly presented me with;" and she drew from the drawer of the table at which she was sitting, a splendid looking manuscript book.

Mr. Neale and Mr. Dobson being both occupied in looking over some of the pupil's exercises which had been left for examination, I took the opportunity of Mr. Hartley's sitting down to muse and consider his theme, and strolled out alone into the play-ground, where the children were amusing themselves in detached groups here and there.

After sauntering up and down for about a quarter of an hour, I perceived the two little Dobson boys within a few yards of me, very busily engaged in heaping mould into bits of broken flower-pots, and arranging them in an orderly way on the gravel walk, after the fashion of dishes at a dinner table. They were so engrossed that they took no notice of me; and I heard one say to the other, "This is a leg of pork."—"And this is sausages," was the reply.

"And this is a ham."

"And this is a leg of mutton."

"And this is roast pig."

"Poor children!" thought I; "the whole result then, of the vegetarian system, is to whet the edge of their imaginations with tenfold keenness for animal food."

"What have you got there?" said I, coming close to them. "Any thing for me?"

They looked shy at first, but after a few kindly words, I succeeded in drawing them into conversation.

"I dare say you are very happy here," said I.

"I am not happy at all," replied one of them.

"Nor I neither," said the other.

"What, not with these beautiful grounds to play in?"

"No; I want something nice to eat."

"What do you call nice?"

"Polonies are nice."

"And so are saveloys," said the other.

"What would you do now, if I were to give you a shilling a piece?"

"My! wouldn't I have a feed? I'd have a mutton pie, and —"

"I'd have sausage rolls," interrupted the other, "and ham, and —"

I didn't stay to hear the rest of the catalogue of anticipated dainties, but leaving them the donation with as much satisfaction as I ever experienced in the expenditure of two shillings, I returned to the house to seek my comrade, whom I now hoped to find inclined to depart.

I had promised to walk with him a distance of about three miles to his father's country-house, and there take luncheon; after which he said he would drive me in a pony chaise to the rail-road, he himself intending to remain at home for the rest of the day.

On returning to the school-room, I found the party pretty nearly as I had left them. Messrs. Neale and Dobson were still occupied at their respective desks; it seeming to be their practice, and one which, as far as I was concerned, pleased me well, to leave their guests to make it out for themselves as well as they could.

Most of the young women had dispersed; but one of them remained to copy out the subject that had been discussed, for Mr. Hartley; and another seemed to be, in a subdued tone of voice, taking the part of Mrs. Dobson, who, silent and gloomy,

was sitting with her album before her, apparently considering what Mr. Hartley had written in it.

"Now, Mr. Middleton," said he, as soon as I entered, but addressing me with a low voice, as if he wished to avoid attracting the notice of the tutors, "I'll be judged by you. I hoped and wished to do my best for Mrs. Dobson's album, but the muse was altogether unpropitious. Determining, however, that she should not be wholly disappointed, I worked up the disobedience of my Thalia into a bit of a *jeu d'esprit*, which, I am sorry to find, has greatly displeased her. Now, will you read it, and say if it ought to make any body angry?"

Mrs. Dobson very solemnly handed me the book, from which I read the following effusion, entitled

The Refractory Muse.

When I was ask'd, for this here little book
To write a little verse,—I said I'd try;
For, short or long, thinks I, by hook or crook,
Something of some sort I can write, sure—ly.

But I, without my Muse, this time had reckon'd,
For all as ever I could do or say;
I coax'd, I call'd, I whistled, and I beckon'd,
But on she popp'd her shawl, and ran away.

And as she went, "I'm off," says she, "like Hannibal!"
But why she mention'd him, I don't descry;
Perhaps her meaning was, "I'm off like Cannibal!"
And she was going to eat a mutton-pie.

JEREMIAH LEADENPEN.

"And pray, sir, may I ask what *you* think of it?" said Mrs. Dobson, as I laid the book down.

"Why," said I, "it is just what Mr. Hartley calls it, a *jeu d'esprit*, and must be received as such."

"I don't like such *sprees*," said Mrs. Dobson; "and to call himself Jeremiah Leadenpen! *such* a name!"

"And why mayn't I call myself Leadenpen, when other writers call themselves Silverpen, Crowquill, or any thing else they have a fancy for?" said Mr. Hartley.

"Oh, that's a very different thing," she replied; "Silverpen has an elegant sound with it, and Crowquill is tolerably genteel; but how vulgar is the name of Leadenpen! Jeremiah too! you know well enough, Mr. Hartley, that your name isn't Jeremiah."

I made an attempt, though in vain, to soothe her indignation, by telling her that "it was very much the fashion in the present day, for authors to write under a fictitious name. We had Michael Angelo Titmarsh, Boz, Phiz, and so on. And as for nonsense, it was so popular, that I made no question people might be found who would even like the strain of Mr. Leadenpen's poetry."

She was not of that number, she said, and could only think her book defaced by it.

"At all events you can cut out that page," said I.

She could do that, she said; and indeed she believed she should.

Mr. Neale now came towards us to express a civil enough wish that we would stay and dine; but to this we opposed a polite but decided negative, as well as to his offer of showing us over the dormitories of the pupils, and of enabling us to increase our acquaintance with the general arrangements of the school. We had both had enough of it, and took our leave; Mr. Hartley wholly discarded, I believe, from the favour of Mrs. Dobson, and not, as I apprehend, in very high acceptation with the other "philosophical minds" that constituted the authorities of Sedley House.

CHAPTER VIII.

A young Man's Difficulties.

"ISN'T that woman rich in the ridiculous?" said my companion to me, as soon as we were fairly out of sight of the school.

"She seems well stocked with absurdities; but I think you were a little too hard upon her."

"Was I though? Well, I really am sorry for that. I did not mean to give her pain. Perhaps I trusted too much to her obtuseness of perception, and did not think it possible that she would discover that I was laughing at her."

"You seem to me to be in the possession of a very dangerous gift, for such I consider a talent for ridicule," said I.

"I am terrible fond of fun, I must confess; but I do not think that I am ill-natured in the exercise of any talent I may possess in that line. Of this I am certain, that I do not intend to be so."

"No, I can believe that. You do not give me the idea of an ill-natured person."

"I should like to have a notion of the sort of person of which I do give you an idea; because, as you have had much more experience in human nature than I have, you may understand me better than I do myself."

"That is not likely, considering how slight is my acquaintance with you; but in one respect, perhaps, I may understand your case better than you do yourself, inasmuch as I may see danger for you where you would apprehend none. You do not, probably, detect a snare in the possession of a turn for ridicule?"

"Yes, I do;" and he shook his head with rather a melancholy smile. "It draws me into the snare," he said, "of sometimes giving pain, though most unintentionally. I have more than once had occasion to see a kind face turned away from me with doubt and suspicion, under the recollection of some instance or another in which I had been playing the fool after the fashion of to-day."

"The being regarded with distrust is a heavy tax," said I, "but one that will most surely and inexorably be imposed upon that class of mankind, who, like yourself, have a penetrating glance for the absurd side of things and people."

"But do you not think that it is allowable, and even our duty, to make use of those powers of mind which nature has bestowed upon us?"

"Unquestionably," replied I. "The great point as it strikes me, is, so to balance them that one

does not preponderate over the rest, which is very apt to be the case when a person possesses a keen sense of the ridiculous; there being such constant scope for its exercise in such a world as this."

"I do not think that the love of laughter preponderates in my mind," said he. "You would scarcely, perhaps, believe me, were I to tell you that I am, on the whole, disposed to be rather a melancholy person."

"I should not have supposed it, certainly, from what I have seen of you; but besides that that is totally insufficient to enable me even to guess rightly at your interior state, I have had too much experience in my own nature, and in human nature in general, not to be well aware that the strangest contrarieties may exist in the same character. And with respect to a talent for humour, I believe that it is more often than not found in company with the deepest and tenderest feelings of humanity."

"How many passages in the writings of poor Hood attest that," said he.

"How many also in the pages of Mr. Dickens," I observed.

"So I believe they would," he replied, "were I to become an author."

"Which it strikes me," said I, "is more than a peradventure."

"Do you think so?" and he looked at me very archly.

"Yes, I do. Come, you asked me just now to

tell you what idea I had formed of you; I think I will venture to give you a little notion of it."

"Pray do, you cannot please me better."

"I do not take you to be an author by profession," said I.

"I have no need to be any thing so wretched as that," he replied; "I am well provided for at present in my father's counting-house, and shall be still better off by and bye, when he takes me into partnership with him in one of the most lucrative mercantile engagements in the city. I am well enough off as far as money is concerned; but," and he sighed, "I am not a happy person."

"You are only seeking to be so?"

"Of course I am, like every body else."

"But you have a good deal of mind and feeling; in a word, you have genius, and this possession it is which renders you restless."

"So far it may be a true bill. The genius I *think* I possess; the restlessness I *know* I do."

"And this restlessness it is which induces you to run after Mr. Grey's crotchets, and probably other novelties of an extraordinary kind. It also, if I mistake not, attempts to dissipate itself in a literary way. A smart paper, perhaps, in some one of the multitudinous periodicals which are now afloat, absorbs some of its effervescence?"

"Well, I will plead guilty to such an occasional perpetration," he replied.

"But still," said I, "you call yourself, on the

whole, an unhappy person. These fritterings and chippings away of your powers do not satisfy, neither probably do they interest you."

"It is very true," said he; "the case is pretty nearly as you have stated it; but it is curious how you should have guessed it; for I am not aware of betraying any dissatisfaction or uneasiness of mind in company; besides, you say you should not have suspected me of feeling any."

"I should not have suspected you of unhappiness, only in so far as I should feel assured that all restless people must be in some degree unhappy."

"But why should you have thought me restless?"

"The finding you in association with Mr. Grey would suffice for that. No persons whose opinions were settled and their minds at rest, but must, as I conceive, detect and turn away from the flimsiness of his theories."

"I perceive their flimsiness well enough; but occasionally there is something original and remarkable in his views which interests me."

"I should be sorry to be libellous," said I, laughing, "but really I cannot divest myself of a notion that you seek Mr. Grey's society more for the bits of absurdity that may be extracted from it, than from any other motive."

"I am afraid there is a little truth in that," said he; "still, I certainly do get ideas of things from

his abrupt, dogmatical way of stating them, which I find in some degree to be instructive."

"It may be so," said I; "but I scarcely know how to think him a safe or wise companion for any young man."

"Certainly not wise," he replied. "But where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?"*

"Your quotation implies that you, at least, look for it where a great deal may be gathered," said I.

"We have been religiously brought up," he replied; "and are all of us, I believe and hope, disposed to reverence and obey our best intuitions."

"Is there a large family of you?"

"No, only four. I have two sisters at home, and a young brother at school, whom my father is educating for college."

"As you were the eldest, I wonder he did not design you for the University."

"I had no predilection for it myself; for had I been sent there, I must have followed one of the three learned professions. Now, the church I do not think myself fitted for, the law I detest, and physic I look upon to be all humbug."

"Oh, as for humbug," said I, "you must be satisfied to take a certain portion of that in whatever pursuit you follow. It is by the exercise of humbug, that people in general retain their power over the minds of their fellow-creatures."

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* Job xxviii. 12.

"This seems to be more particularly the case," said he, "with respect to the three learned professions; for, only just remark the cover upon cover, and labyrinth within labyrinth, wherein the simple truth of the matter in all of them, lies entombed. With respect to the law, let a man's rights be never so plain and self-evident, yet half a dozen great folios must be searched, and a ream or two of paper written, before he can know if they possess a chance of success. A physician must look solemn, and prescribe in mysterious characters some multifarious compound, for a complaint which he knows well enough would speedily cure itself if not vexed by his Latin. In the region of theology, the mystifications on the part of man are such, that really and truly when you have heard what this great bishop has to say on his side of the matter, and t'other little vicar on his, and have looked at the General Assembly's Catechism of one country, and the thirty-nine Articles of another, and the decrees of the Council of Trent of a third, you begin almost to doubt if there be any thing to be believed at all. At any rate, from their mode of exhibiting it, one crying 'It's here,' and another 'It's there,' and all ready to tear each other's eyes out for presuming to say that its any where but just where each for himself chooses that it shall be,—you can, by no possibility, know what the thing really is which you are to believe."

"The process of controversy never yet, I be-

lieve, enlightened the spiritual understanding," said I; "neither was it ever assisted in its search after truth, by hunting for it in this and the other humanly-contrived system, just as one might hunt for a place upon a map. Truth is a universal thing, and can never be confined to specific articles of faith, to say nothing of the absurdity of supposing that you can compel belief of any thing."

"Yet, what cart-loads of treatises have been written," said he, "on the supposition that people may be made to believe whatever the writer chooses."

"Yes," replied I; "and a curious and instructive thing is it for a man, having contemplated the brevity and conciseness of scriptural truth—the gospels, the epistles, the psalms, the proverbs of Solomon, for instance—to glance his eye upon the theological department, say of one of the university libraries, and behold the rows of folios by the hundred, which have been written by way of expounding these simple elements of religion;—whereas, as dear William Law says, 'Only let a man receive divine truth as God teaches it, in the heart and in the conscience, and half a sheet of paper will hold all that he has to say about it.'"

"I believe so," he replied; "assuredly, on looking at the big folios, one would say as David said when he was pursued by his enemies, 'Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of man.'"

"Indeed, that may be truly said," observed I. "But we are wandering from the point; *Revenons à nos moutons.* You would not go to college then, because you had no inclination to follow a learned profession. But what are you following here, by way of interesting and occupying your mind?"

"That's just the query I often put to myself," said he.

"It is one that all persons, especially in the outset of life, should often put to themselves. What is my point, what is my object? sincerely asked of the inner man, would help to clear up many a dangerous fog, through which the individual is incautiously steering his course."

"My object is to be true, to be honest," said he; "at least, I think so; for I love truth, I love realities; and hence it is that I am so restless, and so dissatisfied with the conventionalism and fiddle-de-dee of society, and of almost everything else."

"But surely, the fiddle-de-dee as you call it, and not unaptly, which, if you go into society you must both encounter and endure, is less offensive in that grade of company which I should suppose you usually frequent, than in the class we have just turned away from?"

"I really think not; for in what is called genteel company, I must mince and parade, and seem to take part in its affectations; but with these ridiculous people I can be simple and free from restraint; I can laugh at them to their faces, and I do, to my heart's content."

"But let me ask you, is that a right thing to do? Is it a thing for which you feel no secret self-reproach?"

"I can only say again, that I don't mean any harm, and where the motive is not unkind I do not think the act can be evil."

Perceiving me to be silent awhile on this, "But *you* do?" he said.

"Yes, I do think the act is evil, however exempt the motive may be from it."

"Still, unless I am mistaken in you," he said, "you have yourself, more than a little zest for the absurd."

"It is very true, I have so naturally; but I have lived long enough to have obtained a deep acquaintance with the ill effects upon one's own spirit, which this turn of mind produces."

"But you surely cannot but approve of cheerfulness and gaiety of mind?"

"I approve of it exceedingly; but allow me to tell you, that there is a wide difference between cheerfulness and a taste for ridicule. Cheerfulness is never bitter; it never gives pain. The love of ridicule can scarcely avoid it. Moreover, it is almost certain to run into levity."

"There is that danger, no doubt," said he; "but still, I think that many people, lenient people at least, would kindly call it cheerfulness; since, if it be levity, you only indulge in it as a means of cheering and amusing others."

"But what sort of minds are those," said I, "that are cheered and amused by levity?"

"Not modern Platos or Senecas, to be sure," said he.

"Ah no; believe me," said I, "that levity is a very different thing from cheerfulness, though often mistaken for it. The difference, as I conceive, is the same as would be experienced in coming out of the fresh air and sunshine into a crowded theatre, lighted by gas, and pervaded by an atmosphere of unhealthy odours. Cheerfulness refreshes the mind and causes no painful re-action. Levity intoxicates it, and necessarily produces disorder in the moral system."

"Do you think so?" said he. "Do you not suppose that we want a little nonsense now and then, by way of a fillip to the mind, just as we want a glass of champagne to cheer and refresh the body?"

"So far from its invigorating the mind or strengthening it for any of its certain trials," said I, "I believe that it almost invariably despoils it of its powers, by frittering them away in mere nothings, and thus prepares for times of affliction a fearful augmentation of suffering and dismay."

"I am afraid there is something in that," said he, "for assuredly I have observed amongst my associates, that none of them are so completely wretched, so entirely denuded of all consolation under their vexations and sorrows, as those who

are the most addicted to merriment in society, and to making themselves what is called 'the fiddle of the company.'"

"'To be sure," said I; "and why? Because the things that amuse and divert, always require an audience, and are of very little service for private gratification. Few things are more dolorous than to laugh by one's self. Besides, by the law of compensation, which never fails to make itself felt in the experience of every human being, it cannot be otherwise than that laughter should have its turn of mourning. It would be strange indeed, if there were to be people whose business in this world were only to amuse and be amused, whilst thousands of far more deserving persons than they are, have little else than a lot of sorrow from the beginning of their pilgrimage to the end of it."

"I have thought of that," said he, "very often; and I believe it is a reflection which forces itself upon the minds of almost all gay and prosperous men, particularly if they are much courted and liked on the score of their capabilities of administering to general amusement."

"But I doubt that reflection does not operate to restrain their disposition to trifle," said I.

"I think it leads them to attempt at balancing it by acts of benevolence," said he; "at least, I have often observed that such persons are kind and charitable in their dealings with their fellow-creatures."

"All very good," said I; "but not exactly the thing wanted. The discipline of the mind, the subjugation of the wild eccentricities of the imagination, the living in that sobriety of feeling which befits a soul that is to live for ever,—all this involves difficulty and pain to accomplish. The giving money, on the part of those who have it to give, is a way of compromising one's moral accounts so obviously easy, that it becomes upon all occasions the resort of those who know that they are not by any means what they ought to be in the sight of God and their own conscience."

"There is truth in that," said he with a sigh; "and I assure you, that at times, when I have been contemplating what it is to die, and also what it is to live nobly, usefully, and as one ought to live, I have perfectly loathed the turn for nonsense and what is called fun, to which my mind has such a strong tendency."

"All persons," said I, "will probably have a good deal of artificial drapery to strip off when they stand upon the brink of the river of death. But the having to disencumber one's self of the garb of a mountebank, contrasts in the most appalling manner with the work that lies before one."

"I believe I shall cease to occupy my time and talents in the mountebank line," said he; "for, as I have acknowledged to you, I have hitherto been a candidate for literary distinction, and not altogether an unsuccessful one, in the department of drollery."

"But, if I understand you right," said I, "it has been only in the small enterprizes of periodical publications; magazines, I suppose, newspapers and such like?"

"Yes; 'rats, and mice, and such small deer,' are all that I have fired at as yet. I do confess that I rather long to come out in the serial form; but that ground is so fully occupied, that I could not anticipate any chance of success in taking it. Besides there is something exceedingly poor and low in becoming an imitator; and, whether I were so or not, I should be called one."

"I would advise you to nourish that species of pride," said I, "for it will be a useful shield to you. There is indeed something so exceedingly abject in following in the wake of a successful author as an imitator, that it can only be allowed to those poor creatures who, having to live by their wits, and but a scanty fund of them to turn to, are to be forgiven for using any means, not absolutely dishonest, for getting bread to eat. Still, even in their case, a bill-sticker, or a crossing-sweeper, I should consider the higher occupation."

"I should prefer either calling," said he, "to that of a miserable picker and stealer of other men's notions. No, if I write, I must endeavour to strike out something original."

"But why need you write at all? You don't want to do so on any pecuniary account, you say?"

"Certainly not; and if I did, I would not seek it in the trade of an author."

"You languish then for fame?"

"I suppose there may be something in that."

"You feel yourself to be a clever fellow, and you want the world to know it."

"Shall I plead guilty to such enormous vanity?"

"You may as well, for it has been the case with every talented person since the creation of the world; and one forgives it, as the inevitable and necessary consequence of possessing genius."

"Well, I won't play at make-believe, and say it is not so."

"Never play at make-believe," said I, "in any way; for you may rely upon it that, foolish as the world is, it contains plenty of persons sharp-sighted enough to know what you are about; and none more so than those who play at make-believe themselves."

"But is it not curious," said he, "how a man gets over the display of vanity, which certainly, when you analyze the matter, must be at the root of all authorship? Now, if we were caught admiring ourselves before a mirror, and crying, 'Charming! charming!' how overwhelmed with confusion should we be! Yet, is it not much the same thing, as to the source from which it springs, when an author, a poet for instance, steps before the public and offers his pretensions to notice? Can it for a moment be believed that he would do so if they were any other than what he supposes to be '*Charming! charming!*' Is it that we tolerate self-complacency when

it relates to the mind, and repudiate it when it has respect to the body?"

"Or, is it not rather," said I, "that there is something so divine in all moral beauty, that we are constrained not only to pardon, but even to sympathize with the satisfaction of those who partake of, and exhibit its excellencies?"

"I imagine that must be the case," said he. "There *is* something so divine in it, that even when we possess but the faculty of admiring it, we want to tell the world that we have got it."

"But what sad havoc is often made of the capabilities of the mind by this rash and premature authorship," said I. "People in general, and young people more especially, under the influence of that vanity and self-love which more or less hoodwinks us all, when they feel strongly, conclude as a matter of course that they can describe clearly; whereas it is quite possible, and more likely than not, that they may have a very deep and exquisite perception of beauty, without a particle of the genius and cultivated judgment which are requisite for the judicious exhibition of it."

"We have had a pretty striking specimen of that this morning," said he, "in the extract from Miss ——'s work, which Mr. Neale selected for our edification."

"Yes, that is exactly a case in point. The authoress of that bombast, felt no doubt, all and tenfold more than she knew how to express. But

had her mind been under the proper subjugation of her judgment (supposing her to have any) she would have known that it is by the slightest touch, and the fewest and simplest words, that the presence of genius is manifested; and that, to labour and heave and struggle, and be enveloped in some heavy, thundering, lumbering, unintelligible fustian, will be the inevitable consequence of wanting to say every thing, and a great deal more than every thing that may be thought or said on any given subject."

"I think I should manage to keep clear of running on such a rock as that," said he, "were I to come out in print. But really you don't give me much encouragement to take up my pen."

"I should rather advise your waiting a few years, and endeavouring to mature your mind by study, by observation, and experience, before you turn out as an author. When you have something to say, by all means let your fellow-creatures have the benefit of it. But what have you got to tell us now, for which we may be the better?"

"Oh, I should not attempt any thing of the didactic kind. I am well aware I should have nothing to say of that sort. It would be in the novel form that I should appear."

"That would certainly be the most successful," said I, "estimating success as the getting of money, fame, and popular favour; and of course you would hope and expect to obtain these?"

"I should hope to succeed unquestionably," he

replied; "but I really do not believe I should make money the chief object. I should like to distinguish myself; and whatever of profit was thrown into my hat as I went on my way, I would willingly receive."

"Few persons, I believe," said I, "look much at the pecuniary part of the matter, when they first become authors. In fact, till their names are known, their efforts so seldom get a market, that they have little to anticipate on that score. They only want, as you say, to be distinguished; and on this ground they put into the literary lottery, hoping to draw a prize. And if they do, in all probability it is about the worst thing that could have befallen them."

"And why so?" he asked, in visible surprize.

"Because, from that moment 'farewell the tranquil mind; farewell repose! Othello's occupation's gone.'"

"Gone? I think on the contrary, that it's only just come."

"The man's proper occupation's gone," said I; "supposing him to be a thinking, feeling, observing person; a person properly qualified by genius and by education for the business of a novelist; and if he be not thus qualified, he had far better hire himself out as a footman, yea, even as a shoe-black, than take up such a pursuit; for, in all exhibitions of mind and feeling, whether in the artist or the author, no mediocrity can be permitted. People must not only do *their* best, but *the* best, or they

are wholly unfitted to be candidates for popular distinction."

"There can be no question about that," he replied. "Nothing is more intolerable than the doings of inferior performers in any line. But, supposing a person to succeed in authorship, I am quite at a loss to know why it should be the worst thing that can befall him, and that he should have to say with Othello, 'farewell the tranquil mind,' and the rest of it."

"I think it would be one of the worst things that could befall him," said I, "because of the deadliness of the snares which success would lay across his path."

"What snares are you speaking of?" said he.

"Why, in the first place, success would produce money; and let his indifference to money have been what it might, the easiness and pleasantness with which he would discover that it might be earned, would infallibly stimulate him to continue the efforts that had procured it; and that, principally, for the sake of gain."

"Do you think that a necessary consequence of his success?"

"Pretty nearly so. The marvel would be to find a case in which the literary offspring of a successful novelist had not followed each other so rapidly, and consequently with such diminished worth, that the eldest born had too often good reason to be ashamed of his younger brothers and sisters. And

to this loss of position as a writer, it is not unusual to see a popular author descend, owing to his being strongly beset by the temptation of money."

"I should be sorry to be the victim of so sordid a temptation," said he.

"So, in all probability, would these self-immolated victims themselves be, if they were in circumstances to perceive and reflect upon their hazardous condition. But there are certain eddies and whirlpools in the ocean of life, near which, when a man steers his bark, it becomes totally unmanageable. Amongst these, the attraction of money is one of the most overwhelming and the most fatal. Once within its influence, the man is no longer master of his course, but is driven along, he knows not whither, by the intense force of the magnetism that surrounds him. Truly may he then say, 'farewell the tranquil mind,' for he knows no longer what tranquillity is. He has no time for improving thought, for calm and studious reading, or for patient observation and reflection. His whole being is impelled forward by the driving propensities of haste and covetousness, and every moment is lost that is not spent in scampering to the conclusion of the work on which he is engaged. So thus he goes on, gathering together his crude conceptions, just as a gardener gathers unripe fruit; no matter how green or how sour it may be, the purpose is to get to market with it as fast as he can, and turn it into money."

"This is really a frightful picture that you are drawing," said he; "I would fain believe it a fictitious one; or, if not altogether so, at least a highly exaggerated one."

"You are probably in a position," replied I, "to judge if it be either; for you are, no doubt, acquainted with some successful novelists; and, if that be the case, I think I may challenge you to say, if you do not know some instances amongst them, which, on the whole, would verify what I have been saying?"

"I fear that I do know one or two that would," he replied; "but, as it is 'by others' faults that wise men correct their own,' I should hope to be able to restrain this impatience of nature; whilst the mere effort to do so, would be of incalculable service as a means of self-discipline."

"The mischief is," replied I, "that the powers of mind which are requisite for self-discipline, are likely to be swamped, with every other precious thing, in the torrent that so vehemently drives the man. Judgment, reflection, sustained and quiet study, patience in correcting the hasty impulses of the feelings and imagination; every thing, in short, that helps to cultivate and properly prepare his faculties for influencing and improving his fellow creatures, is precluded all access to him, while his whole heart and soul are absorbed by the excitement of which we have been speaking. Besides, I ask you again, what need have you to place your-

self within reach of these snares? One is inclined both to excuse and to pity those whose necessities constrain them to seek a livelihood by the labours of their pen; but to take it up as a mode of getting into notice, and of being distinguished, '*le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle,*' in my mind."

"Ah," said he with a smile, "you have lived long enough to believe that the pleasures and honours of the world are not worth picking up. But I can only have a notion of it as yet; and not a sufficiently clear one to make it practical."

"Indeed that's true enough," said I; "and I ought to have remembered it. Old stagers, like myself, are ready enough to tell young people that the world is not worth their notice; just as those, who, having looked into a raree-show and had their fill of the sight, inform the next comers that it is but a poor business, and they had better go away and spend neither time nor money about it. They forget that the newly arrived cannot take this for granted; but that they *will* have a peep for themselves, be things how they may."

"Just so," and he laughed. "But when I told you, or rather when you extracted from me an avowal, that it was chiefly a longing for distinction which impelled me to think of authorship, I should also have added, that this was not my sole motive. It was also as a resort and relief from the monotony of my existence, that I contemplated this occupation. I have a very active, ardent mind, which

wearies exceedingly of the routine of £. *s. d.* to which it is daily subjugated."

"Monotony cannot be otherwise than wearisome," said I; "but the learning to endure it is a most invaluable lesson."

"A very heavy one," said he; "I can better perceive its density than its value. The fact is, that we *must* have recreation and change of some kind."

"I grant that; but I would advise you to keep down this idea of the necessity of change and recreation, as much as you can; for it is a many-headed Cerberus that will be apt to spring up and devour all the happiness that the present moment might furnish you with. What is it, think you, that plunges so many persons into disgrace and sorrow, by leading them into expenses far beyond their means, but their habit of yielding to that restless desire of excitement, which is always yearning for change and recreation, and which seems to be peculiar to the human race? The young pig, and the kitten, and the lamb, are never wailing and wanting to be amused: but the young of human kind, when not eating or sleeping, are usually tormenting themselves, and every one else, with incessant demands for entertainment."

"It is to be hoped," said he, laughing, "that they mend of that when they get older."

"Not a bit of it; for it is not because it is a child that the poor infant is restless and craving to

be amused; but because it is a fallen being, and as such brings into the world with it an all-devouring spirit, which in the child may be met with childish things, as properly suited to it; but which in the man can never be satisfied till it has discovered its proper and appointed food."

"The food of the mind, I suppose you mean; and which you would probably say, is religion?"

"I should prefer to call it truth; for the term religion usually conveys an idea so circumscribed by the particular *ism* of particular individuals, that scarcely two persons can be found who attach any precise meaning to it. It is the knowledge of truth, therefore, I should say, which forms the proper food and the proper satisfaction of the mind of man. Now, in setting yourself to the acquisition of this, you would surely find enough to occupy and interest your higher faculties of mind and feeling, for several years to come?"

"The difficulty," said he, "is to know where to look for Truth; and perhaps even to know what it is. Now how would you yourself define it, apart from religion?"

I mused awhile, not from any doubt or confused apprehension respecting the thing of which he questioned me; but from the difficulty of so expressing my thoughts about it as to make myself intelligible.

My silence continuing a little longer than suited his rapid nature, "You see," said he, "how totally

impossible it is, without the intervention of creeds and systems, or some sort of religious dogmas, to define spiritual truth."

"Those are the most spiritual and living truths," said I, "of which we feel the power, but are almost incapable of defining the nature. They come with the quickness of the lightning's flash, and when we would retain or consider them, we find them to be altogether as evanescent. But I will endeavour to give you as clear and as practical a conception as I can of my views on this point. Truth being then, as I conceive, an entirely spiritual and mysterious thing, existing like electricity every where, but tangible and definable nowhere, it is in vain for me to seek the discovery of it as it relates either to things or people, by any process of ratiocination; even in attempting this, I do but get into 'confusion worse confounded.' But, observing that I possess an inner sense, quite distinct from my reasoning powers, which in an exceedingly delicate, small, and humble way, influences my apprehensions both of things and people, I wait upon this spiritual instinct, as quietly and as reverently as I can, and, by this sort of silent attention to its actings, I gradually acquire, as I believe, a just conception of the nature of Truth. Now, you told me, and I was struck with the expression, that you had been taught, with the rest of your family, to reverence and obey your best intuitions."

"We have so," said he, "and it is a blessing

which we owe to the care of a wise and upright mother."

"You have only then to proceed in observing and obeying these intuitions, and you will assuredly grow in the knowledge of Truth. For it is by these interior leadings and pointings that we receive the instructions of Divine Wisdom. I should say to you, therefore, feel after a well-poised mind, and a sense of interior exactness, by which you will be as instinctively conscious of all that is false and foolish, and as quick to discard it, as a person who is weighing any articles in a pair of scales is prompt in perceiving and throwing out of them whatever disturbs the equilibrium he wants to establish."

"That is a vast attainment," said he, "of being able to distinguish at a glance, or as you say, instinctively, between the true and the false."

"It is indeed," said I. "The highest of all attainments, and that which a thoughtful, earnest man would the most fervently aspire to, is, as I conceive, the knowledge of Truth, in its own eternal and immutable nature; not that which passes for being true, because custom and human authority have agreed to say that it is so."

"I am thinking that people in general," said he, "would have to discard a large portion of their present stock of truth, if they were not allowed to retain that which had been grafted upon their minds by custom and authority."

"If custom and authority be the ground on which you accept truth," said I, "you will probably never know much about it."

"I hope I should build upon higher ground, as far as I am personally concerned," he replied; "for I consider that as a low condition of mind, and one that ought always to be disdained, which shrinks from accepting what is inwardly recognised to be true, till the enquiry is made if "any of the rulers or chief priests" have believed in it. Be it from man, woman, child, or even Balaam's ass, I care not, if it be but true; for I want realities, not authorities; the gem, not the casket. The great matter to ascertain appears to be as to how far, and under what modifications, we may trust to the inner sense of which you speak."

"There is a striking text," said I, "in the book of Job,* which I believe receives in the mysteries of nature a profound realisation. It is this; 'That He would show thee the secrets of wisdom; that they are double to that which is.' Everything has its mate (so to speak) both in the physical and metaphysical world. But not to go into a subject that would lead us too much out of our way, I would say, in respect to what we are speaking of, that to every truth there is a corresponding idea in the soul of man, which awakes and answers to its counterpart when brought into contact therewith.

* Job. xi. 8.

And that is no truth to any man which is not responded to and sealed as such, *by its duplicate* in the depth of his own being, 'the Amen, the faithful and true witness.'"

Our conversation proceeded with so much earnestness, that before we had ended our discussion, we were within sight of his father's house. I was greatly pleased and interested with the simplicity and ingenuousness with which he had laid open his mind to me; and as we were winding our way towards the gate that opened on the lawn, I could not but express a hope that he would yield himself more to the philosophical than the fun-loving faculties of his nature. "Now that we may never have another opportunity of talking over these things," said I, "let me leave with you a parting word of counsel. Don't spend your energies, your mind—in short, don't spend your best self in low associations of thought and feeling. Unite in spirit with that which is noble and exalted—with that which is wise and true. Cherish it; marry it; make it the beloved wife of your bosom. How precious are those divine thoughts which, if you care to look for them, you may find in the 8th chapter of the Wisdom of Solomon.

"Speaking of wisdom, which in Scripture, and every where else indeed, is only another name for Truth, 'I loved her,' he says, 'and sought her out from my youth, I desired to make her my spouse, and I was a lover of her beauty.'

" 'If a man love righteousness, her labours are virtues, for she teacheth temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in their life. Therefore, I purposed to take her to live with me, knowing that she would be a counsellor of good things, and a comfort in care and grief. After I am come into mine house, I will repose myself with her; and to live with her hath no sorrow, but mirth and joy.'"

" That is very beautiful," said he.

" Indeed it is," replied I; " and I would ask you to contrast the emotions with which you contemplate the ideas it excites, with those that accompany the indulgence of any zest for the nonsense and vulgarity of Sedley House."

" Oh, hateful—hateful," said he, " I will never go there any more."

" You will be no loser, I think, if you never do;" with which remark of mine our discourse was ended by our arriving at the door of his father's habitation.

CHAPTER IX.

New Acquaintance.

"I AM sorry that my father will not be able to give you the meeting," said he as we approached the house, "but we are seldom able to be both absent at this time of day. My mother will however, I am sure, be delighted to supply his place, in greeting you with a kindly welcome."

In passing through the grounds, I could not but contrast the neatness that was every where apparent in them, with the slovenliness that surrounded the approach to Sedley House. Every thing here bespoke the abode of a man of taste, as well as of wealth.

On entering the apartment where his mother and two sisters were seated at work, a shout of "Here's Charles!" from the girls, and "My dear boy!" from the mother, with a kiss from each, testified that he was that pleasantest of all things in the domestic circle, a beloved son, and brother.

Having presented me to them as "a new friend,

to whom Mr. Grey had deputed to him the task of doing the honours at Sedley House," "I must now play the polite on the other side," said he; and with a humorous imitation of Mr. Neale's introduction of his colleague, " allow me, Mr. Middleton, to present to you my mother, Mrs. Hartley, my eldest sister Eliza, who takes the poetical and sweet sensibility line, and my youngest sister Catherine, commonly called Kate, who occupies the epigrammatic and bon-mot department, at Hartley House."

" And pray allow me, Mr. Middleton, to present to you in return," said Catherine, playfully tapping him on the head, " Mr. Charles Hartley, the gentleman who takes the saucy department in every house."

I felt myself at home with them in a minute; for they were of that scarce but happy class, whose gaiety and ease of manners banish at once all stiffness and restraint. Mrs. Hartley was a fine woman, apparently about fifty years of age, of a tall and commanding figure, and a highly intellectual countenance. The girls were not, perhaps, exactly handsome, but eminently pleasing and attractive in their appearance, more particularly the youngest, whose countenance seemed to radiate intelligence and good temper. I could but recall to mind, as I looked at her, two lines of Pope which, in days that were gone, I had often applied to another;

" Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her thoughts, and as unfix'd as those."

So applicable was the quotation, that I was soon glad to turn away and extinguish the reminiscence which her vivacity, together with some inexplicable charm that hung about her, was making painful to me.

"You are to know, my dear mother," said Mr. Hartley, "that Mr. Middleton and I have not only taken a three miles' walk, but have taken nothing else since breakfast; so that if you will produce us a good substantial luncheon, and that quickly, we shall be glad."

"I hope you will have both," said she; "for I expect to hear the gong every minute," and as she spoke it sounded a summons.

"Your muse was not much to be reproved," said I to Mr. Hartley, as we were discussing an excellent cold venison pasty, "if she abjured Sedley House, in order to share in such '*a pie*,' as this."

"Oh mother," said he, with a laugh, "such a morning as we have had out yonder!"

"The 'philosophical minds' were rich and rare then to-day, I suppose," said she.

"Unspeakably so," he replied. "But hush! I have been promising Mr. Middleton to reform, and never laugh at nobody no more."

"And here are the first fruits of the covenant," said I; "but I suppose I must expect your conversion to proceed somewhat gradually."

"You must even allow me to postpone it," said

he, " till I have read to my mother and the girls, what Mr. Neale calls ' the subject of our morning's exposition ;' " and again we had the measured diction and bland smile of that gentleman.

The luncheon finished, and ourselves returned to the drawing room, the " morning's exposition" at Sedley House was shown up, together with the curious interlude from the little Miss who was invited to express her thoughts and feelings on the occasion.

The amusement of the young people was great at this representation; but Mrs. Hartley received it rather gravely.

" Is it not sad," said she, alluding to the extract which Mr. Hartley had read, " that a person who evidently possesses some genius and feeling, should make such total shipwreck of her gifts, from the want of judgment in regulating and rightly directing them ? "

" The choice of her subject is wrong, as it strikes me," said I; " at least in so far as relates to the poetical inspirations of a child; for, however kindly disposed one may be towards childhood, it is impossible to sympathize with such a forced and unnatural picture of it as this lady gives. At any rate I cannot; but being an old bachelor, perhaps I have not that acquaintance with the capabilities and intelligence of children, which might be requisite to render me a proper judge as to how far they may, or may not, become the subjects of high poetical inspiration."

"Any body may judge sufficiently well of children," said Mrs. Hartley, "to be assured that this is an overstrained and ridiculous picture of their mental powers. But, as Mr. Carlyle not less truly than forcibly designates it, this is 'the age of shams;' and amongst the most prominent of them, is the deifying of two particular classes of the human race,—children and paupers. Now, if I were to say that I am not an amateur of either, I am afraid, Mr. Middleton, that you would groan, and perhaps take up your hat and wish me good day."

"So far from it, that if you wont tell, Mrs. Hartley," and I bent towards her with a make-believe whisper, "I will candidly acknowledge that I am not a bit more of an amateur than yourself in those respects."

"But, mother," said Hartley, "isn't it very base of you, in the face of three grown-up children of your own, to say that you are not an amateur of them?"

"Ah," said Eliza, with a loving smile, "mamma means in a qualified sense. She has been an amateur of us, I am sure."

"And quite spoiled you, Mr. Charles," said Catherine.

"To say nothing of the latitude given to little Kate, to trouble the house from her cradle," replied he.

"Or of Freddy's being called and considered as 'the dear baby,' till he was near upon ten years old," said Catherine.

"Come," said Mrs. Hartley, "leave this keen encounter of your wits. You have said enough to convince Mr. Middleton that I am not an apologist for infanticide. Let me now explain why I say that I am not an amateur in respect to the prevailing fancy for exalting pauperism and childhood. And with regard to the first. Infants I think charming; so charming, that as these saucy young people have hinted, I have scarcely known how to drop the term of baby, as applied to any of my own children. But, extending it to its utmost allowable limit, of, suppose we say, two years, one is gradually forced to perceive, how soon after that period the strong features of vanity and selfishness develope themselves in children; and, to play the amateur, in losing sight of these their striking characteristics, and in representing them as symbols of innocence and heaven, is that which I denounce and renounce as what Mr. Carlyle calls 'a sham.'"

"Certainly, in point of fact," said I, "nothing can be farther removed from the seraphic innocence and cherubic purity with which maudlin sentimentality is disposed to invest it, than childhood, from the period in which it is able to understand and perceive itself to be of consequence."

"That is the mischief of it," said Hartley; "it is the knowing themselves to be of consequence, which makes children in general, so intolerably conceited and disagreeable; and though we were saucy

enough to laugh at my good mother here, and say she spoiled us, it was not in the way of flattering our vanity, or of allowing us to make every thing and every body give way to our claims upon notice and consideration."

"In doing so," said Mrs. Hartley, "I must have violated the dictates both of my understanding and my feelings, as it respected all other people's children; for, from my youth upwards, if there was one thing more than another that I turned away from with disgust, it was the sight of a set of cossetted, dressed up little urchins, girls, more particularly, lisping and mincing, and playing the seraphic, under the cunning consciousness that mamma was doting upon her 'little angels!' I have said to myself at such times, If I ever become a mother, shall I play this part of folly and ignorance towards my children? Shall I call them 'little angels' to their faces, and in the very front of that intense vanity and selfishness which their ignorance and inexperience reveal in its most unmistakable form—shall I say that they are types of heaven? Heaven forbid! I used inwardly to ejaculate; and I trust that I have been enabled both to remember, and to benefit by remembering, the deprecation which, I am sure, came from the bottom of my heart."

"I think," said Hartley, with pleasing earnestness, "that my mother *has* been happy in her endeavours to turn away the minds of her children

from the ever near, and ever dangerous shoals, of vanity and affectation. I don't think that we, any of us, deserve to be called affected people."

"I scarcely know how I should make it out," said Catherine, "in the artificial way. If I took up what Charles calls '*the sweet sensibility line*,' intending to be all gentleness and softness, and scarcely speaking above a whisper, I should be sure to forget all about it in five minutes, and should be trampling '*sweet sensibility*' to death, with some desperate outbreak of my genuine character."

"According to the old copy books," said I, "*nature will prevail.*"

"And long may it do so," said Mrs. Hartley. "By all means govern and direct it properly; but never lose sight of nature; that has always been my maxim."

"A very wise one too," said I; "and the practice of which brings its own reward with it. Simple and inartificial people, having no sidelong purposes to promote, are seldom disappointed in their honest designs; but persons who are influenced by duplicity never succeed in their aim, let it be what it may."

"I am afraid we must qualify that assertion a little," said Mrs. Hartley; "for I doubt that artificial people do, on the whole, too often succeed in their pretensions."

"I scarcely think it," said I; "for pretenders are generally very weak persons; and weak persons commonly fail in compassing their ends."

lo not think that the assumption of pretension," said Mrs. Hartley, "is always an indication of weakness of mind; at least, I have known individuals, who were certainly to be called acute and clever, who were still very affected and very full of absurd pretensions."

"I admit," replied I, "that my assertion seems to be contradicted by facts, when the amazing number of pretenders is considered. But apart from the young, to whom, from their inexperience, some allowance must be made on this score, I would ask you to consider awhile, and see if, amongst all the individuals you know, you can find any, pretending to have or to be, what they neither have, nor are, that may not, in respect to their understanding, be called weak?"

She mused, and so did the rest of the party, for a few moments. "I think I can," said she; "at least in respect to some who are now in my thoughts, it would be impossible, in my opinion, to call them weak people."

"I grant," said I, "that you may find amongst pretenders and affected people, many who are sharp enough in some points. They are too shrewd and penetrating in hunting after their own success *as* pretenders, not to have their wits (such as they are) about them; and it is this keenness of insight to their own advantage, which misleads those who are connected with them, in forming a true estimate of their mental powers. But, supposing the word *understanding* to designate a capacity for per-

ceiving and approving of what is true and elevated in its nature; I think I may venture to say, that you will scarcely ever find this capacity existing in those persons who make pretensions to any thing to which they are not really entitled."

"If you consider the term understanding as implying a taste and capacity for what is true and elevated," she replied, "I believe I must, in some measure, agree with you. And, to be sure, when one rightly considers it, what is a good understanding but a capacity to love and embrace truth? which, assuredly, it is a contradiction in terms to allow to those who live in opposition to what is true."

"And thus, I suppose, the question is disposed of," said Hartley; "and we may write upon it Q E D."

"But mamma," said Catherine, "you have not yet touched upon the second head of your discourse. You have not told us why you are not an amateur of pauperism. I am sure when I think of the pinafores and frocks that I have stitched by the dozen, and the visits with something nice in a little basket, upon which Eliza and I have been sent every week, to all the poor bodies in the place, I should have thought that you loved them as the apple of your eye."

"I pity their poverty," said Mrs. Hartley, "and am glad to do my best to relieve it, just as I pity the helplessness of childhood, and would love and

cherish it. But, as in the case of children when they grow old enough to show their nature, so in that of pauperism when the nature is fully developed, though I would still pity and help, I cannot make mawkish sonnets in its praise, and profess to love it; for I cannot see any thing lovely in a condition of sensuality and vice; a condition moreover, which unhappily cannot be ameliorated as that of the child may be, by proper restraint and guidance; but which is commonly so confirmed by habits of sloth and self-indulgence, that palliation in the shape of bodily aid, is nearly all that can be done for it."

"And even that," said I, "is virtually no palliation. One extends the aid, as one ought to do; but what thoughtful, truthful person, or person indeed of any kind, who looks an inch below the surface, but must know well enough that no real amelioration is likely to be made in the condition of pauperism, because none can possibly be effected without its own vigorous co-operation. And what co-operation in the change of self-indulgent habits can reasonably be expected on the part of the ignorant and the sensual, who, by long submission to the dictates of their passions are become the slaves of their own will? What kind of reformation does even a well educated man, who knows well enough what is right, and who is surrounded with the aids of money, of domestic comfort, of literature, and the arts,—what reformation, I ask, does he usually

make, if, unhappily, he has addicted himself to immoral courses? Supposing him able to effect any change for the better, by what sort of process in the way of self-denial and of continual agonizing conflict, must it necessarily have been accomplished? Only inquire into this, and then say if all the stuff which is now interwoven in the demonstrations from the press and from the platform, as to the purification and elevation of the pauper classes, is any thing else than the merest moonshine?"

"According to my apprehension of the case," said Mrs. Hartley, "and according to its usual results, it is nothing else. For, only observe the instances which are occasionally recorded in the newspapers. It was but the other day, that some interesting sempstress, cruelly taken to one of the police courts for pawning her employer's work, excited such a torrent of namby pamby compassion, that I don't know how much money was forthwith sent to the magistrate for her relief."

"That woman owed a great deal to her name," said Hartley, — "Rosina Herbert! Who could doubt the innocence, and loveliness, and injured sweetness of any body that was called Rosina Herbert?"

"As injured and as innocent as she was," said Mrs. Hartley, "and tenderly as she was commiserated, and bountifully as she was helped, I saw that in less than two months she was brought before the

same magistrate for the same delinquency for which she had just been punished."

"The tender-hearted sentimentalists who had subscribed for her benefit, were at least made wiser against another time," said I; "at all events one would hope so."

"Not they, indeed," said Hartley; "only let some Constantia Courtenay, or any other prettily named vagabond, be taken by the police and be brought up to Bow Street for their misdoings, and the lovers of the maudlin will be sure to invest her with a thousand charms, every one of which may be valued to her at least at half a crown's worth of postage stamps."

"A constant succession of such impostors will probably be the fruit of that great upas tree of the sham species, which thrives so luxuriantly in the present day," said Mrs. Hartley, "and the growth of which is promoted by the aid of some of our most popular writers, who help on this morbid condition of the public mind, by exhibiting pictures of innocent and injured poverty, which exist no where but in their own imaginations."

"According to the views of some of these writers," said I, "there would seem to be but two classes of mankind, the rich and the poor; farther sub-divided into two more, the good and the bad. The wicked of course to be ranked with Dives, and the good with Lazarus."

"But are not these very low and very super-

ficial views to take of human affairs?" said Mrs. Hartley.

"As it strikes me, decidedly so," said I; "but unhappily this is not the age for popular writers in general to take any other. The spirit of the rail-road pervades every thing, and nothing more entirely than the department of authorship. Nobody has any leisure for thought or reflection. No writer, therefore, will lose his time and labour in seeking materials addressed to either. He drives on as the world does, and scatters his effusions as he scampers along, which people may read as they scamper along too; for, commonly speaking, they are only of a kind to be read in a scampering way."

"I am not fond of scampering through a book," said Mrs. Hartley; "I like to have something given me that excites my ideas, and occasions me now and then to lay the volume down, and muse a little upon what it suggests. But it seems to me as though there were scarcely such a thing to be met with nowadays as a suggestive book. I do assure you, Mr. Middleton, that I am sometimes ready to cry when the new works come in from the book-club to which I subscribe. 'What have we now?' I exclaim, as I hasten to turn them over. The first that presents itself is perhaps a scientific treatise upon some mechanical subject, which I don't understand and can feel no interest in. 'Oh, mamma, here's something!' cries one of the girls,

presenting me with a washy novel in three volumes, the seventeenth, perhaps, from the writer's pen, of which, if you read the first page and the last, you are at no loss to guess as to all that goes between. Then there is no end to works upon missionary labour; all very good, no doubt, but one knows the family features of the tribe to which they belong, and could write down all they have to say before reading a page of it. In fact, it is not twice in a twelvemonth I get hold of any thing I care to read."

"Now, mamma, you know," said Catherine, "that you liked Jane Eyre and Mary Barton."

"Yes, I did," she replied, "for I greatly delight in a clever and interesting novel; but one can hardly dine upon that kind of pastry."

"I really think, mamma," said Miss Hartley, "it would be difficult to say what you do like in the way of reading."

"I like truthful, well-written memoirs," she replied. "An impartial, faithful biography, for instance; why cannot we have something of that sort?"

"Hardly, in the age of shams," said I. "Of all departments of literature, that of biography is the most liable to take a tinge from the narrator's prejudices and partialities, and to be presented under circumstances the most dangerous to fidelity."

"An autobiography is the thing I most delight in," said Mrs. Hartley.

"Sir James Mackintosh used to say," replied I, "that a perfectly faithful autobiography ought never to have been written."

"I wonder whether such a thing ever *was* written," said Mrs. Hartley; "I don't believe I ever met with one."

"I think," said I, "that unless a person manages his occupation with most consummate art, he could hardly sit down to talk about himself and his thoughts and feelings through a whole book, without either directly or indirectly betraying enough of his character to enable the reader to guess pretty correctly concerning it."

"Oh no," said Hartley, "he would be sure to betray himself. People may paint and chisel themselves after this and the other charming model, supposing (poor deluded mortals!) that they present only this agreeable representation to all beholders. But paint and chisel how they may, and as long as they may, genuine nature is all the while peeping through the artificial outside, and the real form and features of the mind are as well recognised as those of the body, by every one except the self-deceived original."

"I believe," said Mrs. Hartley, "it is in vain to look for truth in an autobiography. We are naturally as unwilling to be seen in mental as in personal dishabille; consequently, a little of the artificial in heightening the good, or in palliating the evil, will, I doubt, inevitably be practised, when we write, as well as when we sit up, for company."

"One's personal memoirs, in order to be faithful, should be written then by one's enemy, I suppose," said Catherine.

"Or by one's valet de chambre," said Hartley, "since, according to the proverb, no one is a hero to that official."

"What a profound axiom," said Mrs. Hartley, "is that of 'no man is a hero to his valet de chambre!' What a stripping off of fine feathers, and leaving the poor defenceless bird to be pecked at by a host of stern and merciless realities!"

"Oh mother," said Hartley, "what a taste you have for pulling things to pieces, just to see what they are made of!"

"I have a strong taste for realities," she replied; "I do like to get hold of them, I confess."

"It is a great matter," said I, "to know how many of them we possess."

"But what *are* our realities?" said Hartley. "Where there is so much to mislead and to captivate us in this world in which we live, it is difficult to say what are, or are not, realities, and how many of them we can call our own."

"Those bosom thoughts and projects, those cherished hopes and expectations which are the constant inhabitants of our minds," said Mrs. Hartley, "appear to me to be our only realities; for it is here, and with these, that we spend the chief part of our time."

"What do you say to that?" inquired Hartley, addressing himself to me.

"Our interior condition," said I, "let it be what it may, is the greatest of all our realities; for here we are constrained to take up our abode, and, as Mrs. Hartley has just observed, to pass the chief part of our time, and always that portion of it which is the most incapable of being aided by external support—our time of suffering."

"Just so," said she; "and when I have met with superficial and affected people, who behold everything in a sort of magic-lantern representation, I am often ready to ask them what they do with their realities, and where they put their trials of temper and feeling, the wickedness and misery that is in the world, and such like stubborn matters of fact?"

"But surely, mamma," said Miss Hartley, "you cannot expect people to be laying open their secret thoughts and feelings in general society? You would think it right for them to maintain some sort of reserve in that respect?"

"It is a great matter," said Hartley, "to have nothing to hide; for hiding is always akin to thieving."

"You do not hide," said Miss Hartley, "when you do not discover your thoughts. You only act as that master of the house would do, who, in taking his guests into the different rooms, does not think it necessary or wise, to open his writing-desk and show them his papers."

"But you would hide," said Hartley, "if at the

sound of approaching footsteps you hastened to put this thing in a drawer, and another in a box, and threw a cover over all that was on the table, for fear you should be detected in the possession of something that did not properly belong to you; and it is just after that fashion that such people act as my mother is thinking of. They conceal and cover up their thoughts and feelings, till they really don't know what they have got that they can call their own. Now, as Mr. Middleton says, it is a great matter to know what we possess in the way of realities."

"Generally speaking, I think it a great matter," said I; "but (remembering how time was going on his inflexible way while we were forgetting him) there are times," I added, looking at my watch, "when we wish to have nothing to do with realities, as is the case with me at the present moment. They are stern things, however; and reluctant as I am to believe it, they force me to see, Mr. Hartley, that even with the aid of the pony-chaise you promised me, we shall be but just in time to catch the train to town."

They were most pleasantly unanimous in urging me to stay and dine. "Papa will be quite angry with us, Mr. Middleton," said the sprightly Catherine, "for letting you go away before he returns home; for he dearly loves an incident, and particularly that pleasant incident of making a new acquaintance."

"I am sure, from what I have seen of 'papa's' agreeable family," said I, "I should be only too happy to await his return; but I am unfortunately engaged in matters of business this afternoon which cannot be postponed."

While the chaise was getting ready, I preferred a request to the young ladies to let me hear the sound of a noble-looking pianoforte which stood invitingly open. With the ready obligingness of those who were accustomed to do civil things as simply as possible, they at once complied with my request.

It was no common performance that they had to exhibit, with their beautiful and well-cultivated voices; but that charming singing of duets, which is seldom or never met with, except in the case of two persons well accustomed to each other's peculiar style, and frequently practising together. Brief, however, as delightful, was the gratification they afforded me. The pony-chaise was announced as at the door, whither they all accompanied me to say farewell, and to introduce me to a pretty little Shetland pony, which was to convey me to the station.

"Toby is his name," said Catherine; "and I must inform you, Mr. Middleton, that in the absence of my brother Fred, to whom he belongs, he is mamma's very primest pet."

A deal of patting and stroking of Mr. Toby's sleek coat and flowing mane from most of the

party, betokened his importance as a promoter of the enjoyment of the family circle;—as pleasant a circle, I was inclined to opine from the glimpse I had of it, "as e'er my conversation coped withal;" and with much more of sincerity than usually accompanies civil speeches, I added to my parting address, a hope that our acquaintance had not commenced only to end.

As far as regarded the ladies of the family, this seemed only too probable; but I received a promise from Hartley when he left me at the station, that he would "beat up my quarters," when he made out an excursion to the Scottish Highlands, which he had in contemplation.

CHAPTER X.

More of my Relations.

A FAREWELL visit to my nephew Frank being paid, and my business in London wholly concluded, I had only to write a note of leave-taking to Mr. Grey, and I was ready for my journey into the eastern part of the kingdom, where my married niece was living. I had a slight doubt as to whether I should or should not pay the compliment of some pecuniary offering for the benefit of Sedley House, in my communication to Mr. Grey; — but my whole nature so entirely disowned and disliked what I had seen and heard of his present project for the re-generation of mankind, that I could not conscientiously take any part, however small, in its furtherance; and, as the simplest way of settling the matter, I civilly said as much to him in my note.

I stated in the beginning of my narration, that I had a great many poor relations; but, with the ex-

ception of Frank Melmoth, my youngest sister's son, it did not lay in my way to visit them on the present occasion. I have only therefore, to introduce to the reader's notice, Mrs. Wilton, the daughter of my eldest sister; respecting whom, a few words may be necessary, preparatory to any detail of my visit at her house; though I scarcely know how to make them clearly descriptive of her; for Lucy Wilton was one of those persons whom you can understand a great deal better than you can define. I had once taken her to live with me in the intention of adopting her as a daughter, but the course of events frustrated my design.

This circumstance occurred on the event of her widowed mother's death, some years before this time, when she was left to fight it out with the world as well as she could. Not a penny of fortune came to her share; my poor sister and her husband having reaped the fruits of a hasty and imprudent marriage, by always being poor themselves, and leaving an inheritance of poverty, and nothing else, to their family.

Mr. Danby, Lucy's father, was a surgeon in a marching regiment, when my sister fell in love with, and, in spite of all her friends could say, would have him. At the time of the peace in 1815, he withdrew into private practice as a medical man, and set up for himself with little more property than his wife and two or three children, in the large and populous town of X—— in Suf-

folk. Here he lived, and here he might have succeeded very well, but that he fell into habits of expense and self-indulgence, which inimical as they are to success in most pursuits, are particularly so in the profession to which he belonged. A nervous invalid waiting and watching for the doctor's knock at the door, whilst that functionary is regaling himself at his club, or playing the agreeable at a water party or a pic-nic, is not a person to be pacified under apologies, or long imposed upon by fictions; and thus it happened, that the practice of Mr. Danby, which his really agreeable and gentlemanly manners had in the first instance promised to render extensive and valuable at X——, dwindled down into scarcely more than a nominal employment. Such of his old chums as enjoyed a gossip over the bottle, and to be kept in good spirits by his jokes and merry stories, adhered to him to the last; but they were not a numerous, neither were they altogether a remunerative class. Such as they were, however, they became his chief dependence, and that at a time when advancing age occasioned him the most to require the comforts of life.

More, I must confess, as an act of duty than of pleasure, I had kept up an annual visit to him and my sister;—for such were his habits in the latter years of his life, that a few days in his company could be no other than a penance to any tolerably behaved and right-thinking person.

It was a satisfaction to me nevertheless, to do

what I could for them, in the way of putting the younger members of the family to school, and afterwards to their different occupations in business.

Matters went on in this way till his death; which, being followed the next year by that of my sister, the whole family were thrown upon my hands. They were, however, at this time, in a way to get on. The second girl was about to be married pretty well; two boys were gone out to India, and one was in training to follow them. There remained in fact, only Lucy to be disposed of. She was the eldest of them, and at this time, about four-and-twenty, with a sufficient stock of beauty to render it probable that some one or another might fall in love with, and marry her. Her manners too, were such, as to some men would have been singularly attractive; being of a kind so docile and submissive, as apparently to know nothing of an *own* will. To the notice of any man who desired, with the manners of a gentlewoman, to find a nurse, a cook, a housekeeper, a mender of gloves, and a careful guardian of his shirt buttons, in short, a sort of upper servant in his wife, Lucy would have presented all that his utmost expectations could have pictured.

In the sincere hope, that, she becoming to me as a daughter, and I standing towards her in the position of a father, we might be mutually happy in each other's society, I took her to reside with me.

I confess from what I knew of Lucy, I consi-

dered this as rather a questionable result. There was a secrecy of disposition about her, which, though disguised by a gentleness and suavity of manner that superficial observers called "charming," and which caused people in general to speak of her as "such a sweet girl!" was to me, unpleasant and somewhat repulsive. I had been at all times sensible of its presence in her character, when I used to visit my sister, and when they visited me; but on these occasions, so many things and people intervened to prevent our being thrown together in any particular intercourse, that it had never hitherto been of any consequence to me.

I used to contemplate her as a pretty mannered girl, with not a great deal of mind, but a good share of serene selfishness about her, which she cockered up, and cherished in so quiet and unobtrusive a manner, that it was not much in any body's way. But, however careful I might be to prevent it, that it would be very much in my way when we were thrown into constant juxtaposition, I could not but foresee.

There seemed however to be but one alternative, which I offered her; for a home must be provided for her somewhere; and if, as I told her, she could make herself happy in that which I had to offer her, I should be truly pleased to install her in it as my housekeeper and companion.

"Be but sincere with me, my dear Lucy," said I; "you know both my habits and my habitation.

You know, that according to the opinion of most persons, and especially young persons, it must be a very dull life which you will lead with me; and that if you cannot find pleasure in reading, and working, and walking, and riding, and making out your resources for yourself, you will never be able to bear it."

As an alternative, I then offered to find her the means of boarding comfortably with any family amongst her friends, who might be disposed to receive her.

"Oh no," she said, "she couldn't hear of it; she should be happier with me than with any other person; and to devote her life to my comfort, would be of itself a never failing resource to her, let my residence have been where it might; but being such as it was, with those beautiful grounds, with such a library, and with my ever pleasing and improving society, she was certain that she should never know what being dull meant."

And so my niece Lucy and I joined company. It was at a favourable period of the year that we entered into partnership, for the latter end of a most delightful spring was just blending with early summer, and everything about us looked gay and cheery.

As I was a person that "in trim gardens takes his pleasure," we passed a great part of our morning hours in the pleasant occupation of training, and watching, and gathering fruits and flowers.

We rode out on horseback, and made calls upon our neighbours; and as she became my almoner amongst the poor, she had subjects enough for conversation, in reporting the cases of distress or difficulty that came under her observation. On the whole, we made it out so much better than I expected, that towards the end of the summer, I had got sufficiently used to, and attached to her, as to number her amongst the things that helped to smooth the " rugged brow of care," and to be glad and thankful that she had fallen to my lot.

About the beginning of November, I observed a change in her deportment. She was still as gentle and obliging as ever in her behaviour to me; but there was no ease and cheerfulness in her manner, and she was generally absent in mind, and evidently thinking of something else, when I attempted to converse with her. When this had continued for about a week or so, I took the opportunity of her being one evening more *distrait* than usual, to speak of it.

I had been reading to her a beautiful passage from an article in the Edinburgh Review, and pausing for a moment, she remarked after her usual manner of approving of every thing, " that's very striking ! " From the glance I had occasionally cast upon her abstracted countenance as she sat over her work while I was reading, I felt assured that she had not heard a single word of it; so I said to her with a smile, " What is striking, Lucy ? "

She looked a little confused; but returning my smile, she replied, "What you have just been reading, uncle."

"What was it about, my dear?"

"What was it about?—why—about—oh, I know very well, but I have such a poor way of expressing myself."

"Do you know, Lucy," said I, but apparently in a way of *badinage*, "I don't think you heard a word of it."

"Oh! my dear uncle," and she coloured highly, "how can you suppose that I should behave so disrespectfully, as not to be attending to what you were so kind as to read to me. I have not lost a word of it, I assure you; so pray go on, I am greatly interested in it."

"No, my dear," said I, closing the book, "you are not interested in it. You are interested at present, and have been for more than a week, in something else; though what it is I know not."

For a long time she assured me that I was mistaken. She had had a cold for the last week, she said, which had made her quite stupid, and that was the cause of her appearing so absent.

As I found there was nothing to be got out of her on the subject, I let it drop, and for several days afterwards, she was so full of talk and gaiety, that I might easily have supposed myself as much mistaken as she intended I should, in thinking that she had any undisclosed cause of anxiety on her

mind. But I had penetration enough into Lucy's character, to expect that sooner or later, something would occur to confirm my previous surmises.

About a week passed away, when she one morning announced herself by a gentle tap at my study door, and being invited in, approached me with an open letter in her hand.

"Now," thought I, "for a solution of the mystery."

She began with so many apologies for intruding upon me so soon after breakfast, and interrupting my studies before my usual time of ending them, that foreseeing the hazard of an hour spent about nothing, I cut the matter short, by saying, "Sit down, my dear, and come to the point. You have something to say to me with which that letter is concerned; who is it from?"

She had known me long enough to see when it would not do to trifle, and was prompt in replying,

"From Mrs. Morley of X——. You remember often to have seen her, I dare say, uncle, for she was a very intimate friend of poor mamma's. A widow lady you know, and a very—"

"Oh yes, yes, I know; Mrs. Morley a widow. Well, what of her?"

"She has been writing to ask me to make her a visit; but I scarcely know how to think of leaving you just as the winter is coming on."

"Never mind about that. Do you wish to go and see Mrs. Morley?"

"Why, the fact is, she is so very urgent in asking me to make her a visit, that though I would far rather remain with you,— "

"Never mind me;—do you yourself wish to go?"

"Oh dear no; I would far rather stay here; only she is such a very old friend."

I had some difficulty to keep from stamping or raving; the vexing teasingness of talking with a person from whom you can by no possibility get a straight answer, being to me, one of the most trying of small grievances.

"Let me settle the matter for you, Lucy," said I, "as you don't seem to know your own mind, or if you do, you wont tell it. You would like to go to X—— and spend the winter months there; and I wish that you should do as you like. Write then to your friend, and fix your time, and let us consider it as done with."

"But oh, if you should for a moment think, my dear uncle, that I wish to leave you!"

"I don't think anything about it," said I. "Nothing is more natural than that you should wish to visit your old friends; and I shall be quite glad that you should do so. Now then, as the question is disposed of, at least for the present, leave me. We shall meet at luncheon, and then we can talk more about it."

"But, dear uncle, if you would but read Mrs. Morley's letter, and see how she urges me to come —pray do."

To oblige her I took the letter and glanced at it; but having, as I conceived, made out the gist of the case, I could not go into the amplification of it which filled a sheet of paper, besides that hieroglyphical mode of crossing their pages which ladies are apt to indulge in, and which Mrs. Morley had diverged into.

To be brief, the visit, which was to extend to March, was paid; whilst, in the intervening period, a profusion of letters arrived from Lucy, full to overflowing, with expressions of regard and affection for me—of her thoughts being constantly with me—and phrases of the like import. So well did I anticipate the contents of her epistles, that after the first two or three, I sometimes put them in my pocket if they came at a busy moment, and have occasionally forgotten to open them till they had been there for several days.

When the month of March began and ended, and I heard nothing of her return, it seemed advisable to enquire if she intended to come back at all; a case which I had considered as rather doubtful, ever since I found her disposed to accept of Mrs. Morley's invitation; for although we got on, as I have already said, extremely well, and I could have been more than contented with our lot, I never felt myself on sure ground as to Lucy's satisfaction with it. She was a person who always had a point to carry; and the natural one of wishing to be married and settled in an establishment of her

own, I could not suppose her a stranger to, however she might expatiate on the charms of the single and solitary life she led with me. I could not only freely have forgiven her the indulgence of such a desire, but I should gladly have seen it realized in any way that was likely to promote her happiness. But this I did not contemplate as probable, in the match, which, after a most protracted and tortuous kind of correspondence on her side, she at length wrote me word was likely to take place, provided I entirely approved of it, with Mr. Wilton, a gentleman with whom I had a slight acquaintance, and whom I knew to be engaged in a large mercantile way at X——, and to be considered as one of the principal inhabitants of the place, at least, in so far as respected the consequence that wealth bestows.

That she was about to marry for money, and for the sake of being married, and for nothing else, I could scarcely for a moment doubt; for, from what I had seen of Mr. Wilton, he appeared to me to be one of the most unlikely persons in the world to inspire any lady with sentiments of attachment. He was more, I should think, than fifty years of age; repulsive in his appearance, irascible in temper, proud and pompous in manner, and altogether so filled with himself and his own importance, as to treat every body else with an indifference bordering on contempt. He had lived the life of a bachelor too long, to afford any probability of his marrying

upon higher motives than a wish to secure to himself a nurse and comforter for his latter days; neither of which he was likely to find in a vain, superficial sister who had hitherto kept his house; and who, from her assumption of the dress and airs of juvenility, he had reason to expect would marry herself, if circumstances afforded her an opportunity.

Altogether, it appeared to me an unworthy thing for Lucy to accept his proposal, since she wanted neither the home nor the fortune that he had to offer her.

With this impression upon my mind, I resolved to go to X——, and talk with her there; since with her particular habits of intricacy and concealment, I considered it useless to attempt the discussion of the subject by letter; and as to her coming back, though she talked in every epistle of her longing to see me, and of expecting in her next to be able to fix the day for her return, I knew well enough, that after her fashion of managing matters, she might procrastinate our meeting till Midsummer. So I waited upon *her*, in quite an unexpected, and as it turned out, in rather an unwelcome way.

I arrived at X——, and having refreshed myself at my inn, I repaired to the house of Mrs. Morley, with whom, from having seen her at my sister's house, I had some acquaintance. She was an elderly woman, of a very unprepossessing and austere deportment, and altogether a person whom few young people would have preferred as the companion of

their winter hours. I found her taking tea by herself, and in a very ungracious mood. Lucy, she told me, was gone to drink tea with Mr. and Miss Wilton. "I don't know what afternoon there is," said she, "in which she is not there. For my part, I think it is the gentleman that should go a courting, and not the lady, don't you, sir?"

"There could be no doubt about that," I replied.

I accepted her invitation to take tea with her, and after a little preliminary chat, she inquired what I thought of Lucy's engagement.

"It was not quite what I wished," I said, "and I feared Lucy did not exactly know what she was about."

"Oh, trust her for that," said Mrs. Morley. "Lucy Danby always knows well enough what she is about; I only wish I had known it too, and then I should not have been put to the inconvenience I have, in making arrangements for her boarding with me, when they were all to be broken so soon."

"Arrangements for boarding with you, Mrs. Morley!" said I; "excuse me for being explicit; I thought my niece came here as your visitor; not only as an invited, but as a much intreated guest?"

"I don't know how she could think so," she replied.

"Judging from a letter of yours which she received while with me, I think she had sufficient cause for supposing you wished her to visit you."

"Ah," said she, "that letter!" and she smiled

contemptuously, — "Don't you know Lucy well enough, sir, to understand how she manages to bring about what she wishes?"

"No, really I do not," said I; "for, in respect to her visiting you, there required no management at all. She had only to state her wishes, and she would have found no difficulty in the way of their accomplishment."

"So I used to say to her before she went to you, when she was talking and planning as to how her living at X—— was to be brought about."

"Did she always intend then to live at X——?"

"To be sure she did; and now I know why, which I did not at first."

"And why was it?"

"That she might catch old Wilton, to be sure."

"In that case why did she not remain here? Why should she have gone with me at all?"

"Just because she had a mind to see if your neighbourhood would produce anything better; and also because she naturally wished to show a great deal of love and duty to you, and to play her cards well in that quarter."

"But still I don't understand about your letter, Mrs. Morley."

"Bless you, it's as easy as A B C. The case was this:—She went with you for the summer; but before she left X—— she settled with me that I should write and ask her to come and see me as soon as the winter set in; and after she had been

here a little time, she was to break it to you as gently as she could, that she wished to remain and board with me. I did write to her; but forgetting that the subject of her boarding with me was not at present to be mentioned to you, I had alluded to it in some way which prevented her making the use of my letter which she intended. So she desired me to send another, which she could show to you, and by which it would appear that I was inviting her to come as my guest for two or three months."

I did not express the indignation which this account of Mrs. Morley's excited in my mind; but merely observed "that there was no occasion for Lucy to have employed any stratagem to bring about that point, as before taking her to reside with me, I had given her the offer of remaining at X——, and of boarding with any one she liked."

"Oh, she delights in a stratagem," said Mrs. Morley. "If there is a straight road to a point, and she can get to it by a zig-zag, she prefers it; but she'll have enough of it with those she is going amongst: Sally Wilton will beat her at a plot any day, as clever as she is in weaving them."

Angry as I was with the duplicity of my niece, I was not disposed to join in the coarse displeasure of Mrs. Morley. I tried to lead her into some other topic; but whatever I said, she continually reverted to this extremely disagreeable one; so, pleading in excuse for my retiring, that my journey

had fatigued me, I went away, leaving a message for my niece that I should be glad to see her to breakfast with me the next morning.

I shall not dwell upon what passed at our very painful interview. As Lucy's was not a nature to be deeply or profitably affected by any appeal to her moral feelings, I made none; but rather took the severe side of the case, by setting before her the retributive justice which is certain to wait upon all underhand doings. She had much to say by way of explanation of her reasons for acting as she had done; but, besides that it was much too mystical for a plain man like myself to understand, I had not the least inclination to hear it. As little was I disposed to attend to her representations respecting her feelings for Mr. Wilton, and how it happened that she had been prevailed upon to accept his proposals.

"You always meant to live at X——, Lucy," said I, "and most likely you always meant to marry Mr. Wilton—at least if you did not meet with any thing better."

She gave vent to a profusion of tears and sighs, mingled with many expressions of deep regret to find me, as she expressed it, so "inflexibly disposed" towards her.

"Facts are stubborn things, Lucy," said I, "and when I clearly perceive them before my eyes, I cannot be persuaded that they are fictions."

"But if I would but hear, how both she and Mrs. Morley had mutually mistaken one another

on the subject of her boarding at that lady's house, —she could make it all as clear as daylight."

"I cannot hear it, Lucy," said I. "If Mrs. Morley has told the story wrong, you must set it right between yourselves. Only spare me another version of it."

Having undergone the penance (for such to me it truly was) of an interview with Mr. Wilton, wherein I made such arrangements with him as prevented Lucy's going into his family as an entirely portionless girl, I left the place, declining her offer of accompanying me back into Northumberland. My housekeeper, I said, should send her whatever she might have left at my house, and I must beg to be spared the pain of seeing her there at present.

Perhaps it might seem harsh and unforgiving on my part, that I could not be present at her marriage; but she had wounded me in a way that I could not very easily, or very speedily, forget. Had I, in any measure, trepanned her into quitting a place, or people, to whom she might be supposed to be attached, there would have been some excuse for her conduct; but acting as I had done by her, it was so entirely a gratuitous piece of treachery that she had practised, that I could have no wish, at least for the present, to see any more of her.

In a very short time she married Mr. Wilton, and thus became the mistress of one of the handsomest houses in X——, and the wife of one of the most disagreeable of its inhabitants.

I had seen her once, and but once, since that event. Some business connected with her father's affairs, which had been in the lawyer's hands since his death, requiring my presence at X——, I had been her guest for a couple of days. This was at the lapse of about five years after her marriage, when sufficient time had passed for her fully to understand the kind and degree of felicity which she had provided for herself; and, to be sure, if I had not known Lucy, and Lucy's ways, I might have believed her at the summit of earthly happiness.

It was nothing that Mr. Wilton snarled at her every time he opened his mouth; nor that his affected sister, who remained their inmate, contrived in the most bland and playful manner, to set the poor wife at nought, and to have her own way in every thing; Lucy was bland and playful in return, and meekly took her own way only when it stood in the way of nobody else. It was clear that she had to submit to both Mr. Wilton and his sister, and that the yoke she had to bear was by no means a light one. But whatever she might have to endure of painful or degrading, it was carefully concealed from me; as far, at least, as her efforts to hide it could be successful. Nothing was to be presented to me but what was of the halcyon kind.

I was really pained for the continual fight with stern realities, and the never-ceasing pantomime in which this poor young woman seemed to pass her time; and the more painful was it that, being childless, she had not that influence from tenderer ties

which might have softened her nature, and subdued the intensity of her pride. For pride it was that with Lucy took the place of principle, and enabled her to endure anything and everything rather than see and acknowledge her own frailties and mistakes.

I kept up a languid and intermitting correspondence with her, but at this time I had not seen her for ten years; and, but for the occasion which called me to town, I should perhaps have seen her no more. But, as her last letters had spoken of Mr. Wilton as being in a declining state of health, and herself, as she expressed it, "sharing in the cup of sorrow, which, sooner or later, must be presented to the lips of all who sojourn in this vale of tears;" meaning, I apprehend, in simple parlance, that she was greatly tried by an ailing, peevish husband, it appeared to me that I should feel more at peace with my own heart, if I paid her a visit before I went home.

One obstacle to my perfect satisfaction with this purpose, and that rather a strong one, arose from a strange alteration which the tone of her recent letters indicated to have taken place in the habits and views both of herself and her husband. From what I have said, it might seem that almost any change in that respect would have been for the better; but when I state that her last communications had been filled with denunciatory quotations from Scripture, interspersed with lamentations over the spiritual condition of the greater part of her

relatives, accompanied by not very obscure hints as to the doubtfulness of my own, it may be supposed that, knowing what I did of Lucy, it was not altogether without reason that I anticipated the probability of finding her engaged in a line of acting of a far more repulsive kind than any in which she had yet performed.

If indeed she were in earnest in her religious zeal, I should have rejoiced at, and have respected so desirable a change in her character; but in all that she had to say on the subject, there was such a tone of Lucy Wilton, and such a savour of *her* spirit, as afforded only too much cause to suspect her sincerity. With regard to Mr. Wilton, now approaching those years of which it must be said, "there is no pleasure in them," unhappy in temper, and suffering in body, I could easily understand that there might be some truth in his thinking it time to enquire "who would show him any good?" The faded Miss Wilton, his sister, I also supposed might be pretty well tired of the phantasmagoria of her past existence, and be looking after something more real and more satisfying. But that Lucy should be solemnized into a truly religious person, I confess I doubted; though I reproved myself for my incredulity. "One must hope the best," said I to myself; and so I went on hoping the best that I could; but with all my hopes, I was glad to think that my visit to her would only last from the Monday to the Thursday.

CHAPTER XI.

A Visit to the Religious World.

MY offer of a visit having been answered by a letter from Lucy expressive of great pleasure in the prospect of seeing me, I proceeded to X——, where I arrived in time for their usual hour of drinking tea. I was shown into the dining-room, whither my niece soon hastened to welcome me, and we met as such near and long parted relatives should meet, with affectionate gladness.

The first salutation over, I observed a greater change in her appearance than even the lapse of ten years, at her period of life, would have warranted. She looked thin and withered, and her countenance wore a wan and solemn expression, which I could not tell whether to attribute to illness or sorrow. She was dressed, however, as she was wont to be, with careful attention to fashion and style, and with all the appendages of chains, bracelets, rings, and the like, which ladies in general are fond of exhibiting. To my enquiries respecting Mr. Wilton, she replied that he was but very

poorly, and so lame from the gout, that he was not able to come down stairs, or he would have accompanied her, to have given me the meeting in the dining-room.

"For it so happens," said she, "that we are not alone to-night. Our very dear friends, Mrs. Lane and her daughter, have accidentally dropped in to take tea with us. But I hope you will excuse it. Indeed, if you knew Mrs. Lane, as I hope, my dear uncle, you will, before you leave us, you would think as we do, that it is quite a privilege to be in her company."

As I had already dined, I declined her offer of ordering any thing for me in the way of refreshment, and returned with her up stairs to the drawing-room; where, having paid my respects to Mr. Wilton and his sister, I was introduced to Mrs. Lane, the lady whom it was "quite a privilege" to know, and whose welcome at the house of Mr. Wilton I could well understand, as the circumstances of the evening unfolded to me his present condition of body and mind. That it was a pitiable one in respect to both, a short interval sufficed to demonstrate. He was enfeebled to a degree which rendered it difficult for him to move from his chair without assistance; whilst, just in proportion as his corporal strength declined, the irascibility of his temper seemed to have increased. Not a word that Lucy uttered but he contradicted, generally before he knew what she had to say.

Miss Wilton, his sister, was more wrinkled than when we last met, but otherwise she was but little altered. She was a person who appeared to have moulded herself, by long practice, into a mode of being, over which time itself had but small influence. It must have been more than thirty years since I first knew her, and such as she was then, as to dress and manner, and apparently habits of thought, such she was still. Precise, smooth, kindly sarcastic, by which paradoxical expression I mean that she had the faculty of saying the most cutting things with unequalled civility, and even pleasantry of manner; adorned with the most studied attention to appearance, and only an old girl instead of a young one, she was just the same Miss Wilton as I had ever known her.

A considerable interval after my entrance was occupied by a long detail on the part of Mr. Wilton of his numerous complaints, how many sleepless nights he passed, how many different opinions a great many different doctors entertained of his case, and his own conviction that nobody was ever so much afflicted as himself; to all of which I replied with as much sympathy and kindness as I could. Thinking at last that he had talked enough about it, and that it might be desirable to divert his mind to some more general subject, I began to speak of the little incidents of my journey, my observations on the changes which time had made in the mode of travelling, and matters of the like sort; in

which I was, as the phrase is, "running on," when a slight motion of his hand suddenly signified that I was to be silent. On looking round to see what for, I perceived that every face in the room was lengthened, eyes closed, heads inclined a little on one side, and that Mr. Wilton was about to pronounce a long blessing, or grace, preparatory to our engaging at the tea-table.

Certainly, I don't know why this act of devotional acknowledgment should not be performed before every other meal as well as that of dinner; but it took me rather uncomfortably by surprise, inasmuch as it made me feel awkward in having kept them waiting while I was spinning out the time in idle chat.

"I often think, sir," said Mrs. Lane, addressing Mr. Wilton, "what a precious privilege christian people enjoy above others, in having all their meals sanctified to them by prayer."

Of this remark he took no notice, but, after sipping once or twice at his tea, he broke out suddenly with,

"Lucy, what the ——"

"What is it, my love? Is your tea too sweet?" said she, hastening to him, happily time enough to keep in the residue of his exclamation.

"Too sweet,—no! All wash!—all catlap!—who can drink such stuff? Take it away; I'll have some coffee;" and he snatched at the bell-rope, which he pulled without ceasing till the servant appeared.

"Bring some coffee directly;—and, d'ye hear, let it be hot and strong."

"Yes sir."

"And here,—stay,—what in the world do you run away for, before I have said half what I have to say? Let it be very hot and strong, and tell the cook to put an egg-shell in it to clear it."

This mandate issued, he groaned heavily, was silent and gloomy, and made everybody else so, for a short time. Then, with an impulsive jump of feeling, he suddenly cheered up, and turning to Mrs. Lane, who sat next him, he laid his hand upon her arm, and inquired what she was saying just now?

"Oh, nothing of any consequence," she replied: "I was only observing that christian people have many privileges unknown to the worldly."

"I wish I was in possession of those privileges," said he; "I wish I had your faith, and was as good as you are."

"My faith," she replied, "you could not have perhaps, by wishing for it; but, as good as me you can easily be, for I am nothing but a poor wretched sinner."

"We are all poor wretched sinners," said Miss Lane, "and in us dwelleth no good thing." The simpering smile which accompanied this remark, seemed as little in unison with any consciousness of personal demerit, as could have well been conceived.

There was something curiously amusing about this mother and daughter. I judged them to be persons whose lot in life was low, but rather by the force of circumstances, than by birth and education; for their manners, though easy to familiarity, were not obtrusive, or in any degree indicative of vulgarity. Mrs. Lane had evidently the advantage of her daughter in understanding; but an air of extreme good humour appeared equally to characterize them.

It was so entirely new to me to be in company with persons who mixed religious doctrine, just as one might mix the passing topics of the day, in ordinary discourse, that, for some time, I scarcely understood the allusions and quotations which garnished the discourse of Mrs. Lane. Its deficiency in that earnestness and solemnized feeling, which, as it seemed to me, would spontaneously accompany a deeply devotional sense of spiritual truths, was quite startling and offensive to my habits of mind. But there was something so irresistibly cheerful about her, that I found myself at last more disposed to smile at, than to be angry with her conversation; which largely predominated over that of everybody else. She was manifestly there as the female confessor and director of the family in general, and the spiritual consoler of Mr. Wilton in particular.

The curious jumble which that poor man exhibited of peevishness and penitence — hope and despair—sighs and groans, interchanged with a short,

chuckling laugh when Mrs. Lane suggested to him some forced application of a hopeful text of Scripture, was at once painful and grotesque. I wished a hundred times in the course of the evening, that I had not come; for though I sincerely desired to be sympathizing and helpful to my niece and her husband, it appeared to me that if I had fallen in with a party of foreigners, who were talking upon things very interesting to themselves, but totally unintelligible to me, I could not have been farther removed than I was, from all capability of participating in their feelings.

Their religion did not convey to me the idea of religion; though I could well understand how any person destitute of the faith which springs from a knowledge of his own heart, and of that Infinite Being who tries and proves the ground of it, a person frightened too, with the prospect of death, and what may come after death, as was probably the case with Mr. Wilton, might greedily and thankfully catch at the cheerful, triumphant ministrations of such a person as Mrs. Lane.

I sat by, silent and amused with *her*, but ignoring as much as I could (that I might not betray any discontent therewith) the observations of the rest of the party; and thus simply as a spectator, I intended to have remained; but Mrs. Lane addressing herself to me point blank, with a request to know my opinion on a point of doctrine which she was enforcing most energetically for the encou-

ragement of Mr. Wilton, I was forced to make a reply, taking care however, that it should be of a sort as little likely to lead to controversy, as possible.

My caution did not serve to deliver me from the hands of this pertinacious lady, whose knowledge of dogmas, and large acquaintance with Scripture, placed her in the condition of those accomplished people, who are always restless in company, till everybody has fully felt, and done homage to the force of their attainments.

The subject on which she desired my sentiments, was the Calvinistic doctrine of election; respecting which, I gave a vaguely expressed opinion, that infinite mercy might, peradventure, have ordained the eventual happiness of all created beings.

"Ah sir, that wont do; we must not hang things on a peradventure; we must have security."

"Sure we have got Mr. Grey here in petticoats!" thought I, but I said nothing, and Lucy took up the cause.

"Oh yes," said she, "we must have something certain to depend upon. We could not have a moment's peace without security."

"What better security can the creature have," said I, "than the boundless mercy of the Creator?"

"His mercy," said Mrs. Lane, "is only for those to whom it is promised. 'Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated;' that's what I call security, sir."

"But who is Jacob, and who is Esau," I inquired, "as applied to the creature's security from condemnation, or his liability to encounter it?"

"God's people are of Jacob's line," said Lucy, "and the people of the world are of Esau's."

"And who are God's people," said I, "but those who know him, and love him, and seek to do his will, as far as human infirmity will permit them?"

"Oh, my dear sir," exclaimed Mrs. Lane, "I see where you are. You are bound in the bonds of legality."

"That's very clear," said Miss Lane.

"I am too much afraid of it, indeed," said Lucy; Miss Wilton only smiled.

"I remember to have read of Mr. Legality in the Pilgrim's Progress," said I; "but I totally forget what were his characteristics."

"Come Lucy, isn't it time for prayers?" said Mr. Wilton, yawning.

"No, my love, not yet! Are you tired?" and she came up to coax and pet him into behaving well a little longer.

"With respect to legality, sir," said Mrs. Lane, spreading out her left hand, which she patted with the forefinger of the other, as she laid down her position,—"here you see is the law, and here is the gospel. Now the man who looks to be saved by his works, is under the law; under the bonds of legality—in short, just where you are."

"On what ground do you so judge me?" I inquired.

"Because you talk of those being the people of God who *do* his will."

"Are those then his people who do *not* do it?" I asked.

"Nobody can do the will of God," said Miss Lane.

"I am sure I cannot," said Mr. Wilton, "I am a poor sinner, and can do nothing."

"Then you are just where, and what you ought to be," said Mrs. Lane; "and that good gentleman must pardon my telling him that you are on much safer ground than he is."

"Do you really think so?" said Mr. Wilton, with a faint flash of joy in his countenance.

"I am persuaded of it." Then turning to me she went on. "'Because thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,'—ah sir, think of that!"

"But if I were to think of it for ever," said I, "I could make no personal application of it to myself, in the sense you do, because I do not consider or speak of myself as having need of nothing; for I need the mercy of God as much as the man who is going to the gallows."

"Come, come, I am glad to hear that," said she, "I shall begin to have hopes of you."

"Oh, we shall make my uncle one of us," said Lucy, "before he leaves us."

"How long a time will that process require," said I, "for I am going on Thursday?"

Here there was a general exclamation of surprize; and Lucy remarked that "that was impossible; for the Rev. Mr. Rigby was coming to X——, and was expected to preach on Thursday evening; and she would not have me miss hearing him for the world."

"He is come," said Miss Lane; "and I had the pleasure of shaking hands with him this afternoon."

"Then we shall meet him to-morrow evening at the Herveys," said Lucy, "oh, my dear uncle, how glad I am!"

"Ah, sir," said Mrs. Lane, "that's the man for you to talk with."

"I'm afraid he's a little too sharp and severe for Mr. Middleton's taste," said Mr. Wilton.

"If I mistake not," said Miss Wilton, with her well remembered satirical smile, "Mr. Middleton has no objection to the flavour of lemon-juice in his viands."

"That depends on circumstances," said I. "If the lemon is used to disguise a hash that has been warmed and served up over and over again till everybody is tired of it, I think it only makes it more unpalatable."

"You will get no hashes from Mr. Rigby," said Mrs. Lane, "but freshly cooked wholesome meat."

"Perhaps Mr. Rigby may think the 'milk for babes,' more suitable for Mr. Middleton's present condition, than the strong man's meat," said Miss Wilton, with the same pleasant smile.

"Milk or meat," said I, "I am afraid I shall not be able to wait over Thursday for its administration. However, we need not talk about that now. You were pleased to observe, ma'am," I continued, addressing Mrs. Lane, "that you began to have hopes of me, in consequence of my saying that I considered myself as standing in as much need of divine mercy as the man who is going to the gallows. May I ask you what the '*having hope of me*,' means?"

"Why, that you will be saved, sir, to be sure."

"You had no hope then, of that, before I made that remark?"

"How was it possible, my dear sir, while you were talking about good doings as entitling people to consider themselves the objects of divine favour?"

"I am not aware that I so expressed myself," said I; "but be that as it may, I will venture to enquire if there are to be no good doings on the part of those that are saved?"

"None that are to be trusted to. 'Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, did not attain to the law of righteousness. Wherefore?—Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that

stumbling stone.' Just where you stumble, sir. You are for working, just for very life; and your reward is not to be reckoned to you of grace, but debt. Now, I am for free grace—free grace, sir, all the world over."

I was about to ask her to define the term; but Mr. Wilton, weary and restless as a petted child when it no longer engrosses the notice of those around it, again called out to his wife, and not as before, to enquire if it were time for prayers, but to tell her that he was going to ring the bell for the servants to come into family worship. Mrs. Lane being requested to officiate, she selected, as I supposed she would, some portion from the sacred volume which bore upon the subject of election. The 11th chapter of the epistle to the Romans was her choice, and very emphatically and properly she read it; but with so ample a store of practical wisdom to choose from, it seemed to me a want of judgment before unlettered and unreflecting people like servants, to fix upon a part of Scripture involving some of the abstrusest points of christian doctrine.

Deeply however, with her, and with the Apostle, and with the Spirit that spake in him, did my inmost soul sympathize, when she came to that noble apostrophe with which the chapter concludes: "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?

"Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?

"For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen!"

The right chord was here touched. Subdued and prostrate in heart, I bent my knee with the rest of the party,—little conscious of the phraseology of Mrs. Lane's extempore prayer; but keeping as close as I could to the flowing spring of love and adoration which those divine words had opened up within me.

CHAPTER XII.

A Tea Party.

THE following morning after breakfast, as I was going to my room, Lucy came to me with a bundle of tracts, which she begged of me to put into my travelling trunk; at the same time specifying three or four which she particularly wished me to read immediately.

I smiled as I took them, but promised to do as she requested; and as no time seemed more favourable than the present, I went into my apartment and forthwith sat down to the perusal of them. "What can one say to all this?" thought I, when I had gone through about forty pages of what the writers thereof no doubt considered as religious teaching, and under that belief had put it forth for the edification of their fellow-creatures, more particularly for the benefit of the poor and illiterate; but to whom, it was no harsh or unreasonable judgment to suppose, that the greater

part must be totally unimpressive and unintelligible. Though filled with an abundance of doctrine, and of scriptural terms and texts illustrative of that doctrine, I observed that throughout the whole of it there was scarcely any allusion to those plain preceptive parts of Scripture which bore upon individual practice, or to the influence and teaching of that Spirit who is promised to us as our "guide into all truth."

That they were written by those who were deeply imbued with what Coleridge calls "bibliolatry," there could be no doubt; but that they were the effusions of persons who had any actual knowledge and experience of divine truth, in a way that fitted them to impart instruction to others, I was satisfied could not be the case, or they would not have so entirely failed to affect me. For, although it is quite possible, and indeed highly probable, that the thoughtless, and still more the depraved and ill-disposed, should receive no impression but one of distaste and disgust from all kinds of religious reading, it is, I believe, quite impossible for those who are seeking truth in the love of it, and whose honest aim is to purify their hearts from evil, to read any dissertation upon religion and morality which emanates from the writer's actual consciousness of truth, without an instinctive sympathy with his statements.

"I can make nothing of your tracts, Lucy," said I, as in the course of the morning I sought her for

the purpose of restoring them to her; "for there is no response from within to anything they propose."

She begged me to retain them; and perceiving that I was determined to have nothing more to say to them, she expressed extreme regret, mingled with many apprehensions that I was not aware of the error into which I was betrayed, in rejecting the counsels of persons so devoted to the cause of religion as were the writers of these pious effusions; —"persons," said she, "whose whole lives are spent in doing the work of the Lord."

"I think little of that, Lucy," said I.

"Little of that, my dear uncle!" she repeated with a look of dismay. "You surely do not know what you are saying. Is it not the highest privilege a human being can receive, to be daily doing something for the Lord?"

"That depends," said I, "upon the value of that *something*. At present, there is such a rage for teaching, that no sooner does a person get a smattering of knowledge on any subject, more especially the subject of religion (because, though the hardest to understand experimentally, that is easier than any other to talk about), no sooner does he get stocked with a little head knowledge of doctrine, than off he goes, sounding his trumpet through the land, summoning the populace to sit at his feet; and this he calls '*doing something for the Lord.*'"

"Oh, uncle," said she, "you are really very severe!"

" Severe or not," said I, " such is actually the case; and I would advise you, Lucy, to be very cautious of hearkening to this spirit of dictation, this longing to be speaking and teaching, which is seldom found in those that are really best fitted for the task of beneficially instructing and influencing their fellow-creatures. For, such persons know well enough, that the first work they have to perform in religion is upon themselves, not on others. That is a very solemn and a very profound precept, uttered too, by Him who knew what was in man, ' *When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*' "

She looked a little disconcerted, but still clinging to the one idea that possessed her, she replied, that even if it were so, and allowing that the writers of these tracts might not be altogether so perfect as in my opinion they ought to be, still their mode of stating what they knew, might suggest some considerations to my mind which it would be profitable to me to reflect upon.

" Our besetting sins take such hold of us," said she, " that we have need of being instructed by ' line upon line, and precept upon precept,' before we can in any degree understand their nature or extent."

" As to that," replied I, " without at all depreciating the advantage of often and deeply administered instruction, I believe that our most vivid illumination respecting our besetting sins, is frequently obtained by what we call the merest trifles.

A sentence, or even a word, in a book we are reading, or that we happen to hear in some passing discourse, a serious look from a friend, and numberless other small circumstances, will often serve to lift a thick veil and show us an interior state of evil which we little suspected to belong to us."

She was about to make some reply, but interrupting what she had to say, "I cannot go into any farther discussion of this subject," said I. "Let me, indeed, suggest to your calm consideration, Lucy, whether at my age, and knowing as you do the habits of my life, it can be necessary for you to be troubled about my spiritual condition; and whether it is reasonable to suppose that I can require to be taught what is truth by such productions as these?"

Then, saying that I was going for my morning's walk, I kindly bade her good bye for the present, and quitted the house, to wander about the beautiful environs of X——, with which I was well acquainted, and regarded in the light of old friends.

We met no more till dinner, which meal passed as uncomfortably as might have been expected, when the master of the house was ill and cross, and not only uneasy himself, but managing to make every body else so. I think, however, it would not have been altogether so trying, had Mr. Wilton kept to his cross and grumbling impulses; but the perpetual see-saw, the "here we go up, up, up,—and here we go down, down, downy,"—of his childish and wayward nature, was fatiguing and depress-

ing to the last degree. One never knew what he would be at. Sometimes, when I thought I had fixed him in a tolerably quiet mood, and was trying to keep him there, by managing him just as I would a fractious child, he would suddenly interrupt any little anecdote I was telling for his amusement, with abrupt enquiries as remote from the subject before us as the antipodes.

"Where's that picture, Lucy, Mr. Smith brought here the other day?" was one of his questions, just as I was in the middle of a narration of my visit to Sedley House.

"It's somewhere in my portfolio, my dear," said Lucy; "but perhaps you don't want it just now?"

"Yes, I do; I should like your uncle to see it. It's my portrait," he continued, "done in crayons; I want your opinion of it."

I may here observe, that Mr. Wilton, like most vain people, had a picture of himself in one style or another, in almost every room in the house. One of a very large size, in which he was portrayed in his alderman's gown, "*very noble!*" as Mr. Pepys would say, hung over the chimney-piece of the drawing-room; and more than once since my arrival, he had asked me if I thought him much altered since it was painted.

After a long search, the picture by Mr. Smith being produced, its merits had to be discussed; which they were, with a sort of sickening deference on the part of his wife and sister, to the vanity and

caprice of the original, that painfully testified the poor degrading part of sycophancy which each had to act, in order to keep the tyrant of the house in tolerable temper.

I broke up the sitting by enquiring what time we were to start for the tea-party Lucy had mentioned the evening before, and at which, though disinclined to be present, the alternative of a duet with Mr. Wilton had induced me to promise attendance. Miss Wilton, who I suspect at heart had no great relish for "the privileges" of which Lucy affected to make so much, having proposed to remain at home with Mr. Wilton, my niece and I repaired together to the house of Mr. and Mrs. Hervey, whom she told me, as we went along, she numbered amongst her most particular friends. "It was to Mr. Hervey's ministry," she said, "that she attributed her conversion."

"Is he a resident clergyman in X——?"

"Yes, he has a church here. He succeeded Mr. Rigby, who has removed to a larger sphere in Norfolk. You will, I hope, be delighted with both; but I dare say Mr. Hervey will not be very prominent to-night, for every body is silent when Mr. Rigby is present, naturally wishing him to take the lead."

We found the greater part of the company assembled when we arrived, and amongst them Mrs. and Miss Lane, from both of whom I received as warm a greeting as if I had known them twenty

years, instead of as many hours. I had learned from Lucy, that Mrs. Lane was a widow, and, as I supposed, in rather reduced circumstances; "but she is rich in faith," she added, "and truly a mother in Israel."

It was my lot to occupy a chair next to Mrs. Lane, which led to her very soon resuming the subject we had left unfinished the evening before. I could have been glad at the present moment to have escaped the farther discussion of it; for we were surrounded by a group of persons who, in addition to their being strangers to me, exhibited such a solemn and forbidding air, as to render it an adventurous task to make myself conspicuous in any possible way.

Mr. Rigby, the great gun of the evening, was a tall and rather a good looking man, but of a singularly stern expression of countenance. One could scarcely have imagined it possible for him ever to smile, so rigid and unrelaxed was every feature in his face. Mr. Hervey had rather a milder physiognomy, but not much. He seemed, like his friend, to have drawn himself up into an attitude of hostility against every thing cheerful and pleasant.

"Grim-visaged, comfortless despair,"

was a figure of the poet's which very aptly characterized them both; and I felt in respect to each of them, as if I had suddenly come under the influence of a freezing machine, and that all gaiety of heart

and capability of enjoying myself were at once converted into ice.

Besides these two gentlemen, there were three others present, who were much their juniors, and who Lucy informed me were all curates at different churches in X—— and its vicinity. These young men occasionally took a part in the conversation, but obviously under much restraint from the presence of Mr. Rigby and Mr. Hervey.

As for the ladies, of whom in addition to the mistress of the house there were several, they scarcely spoke above a whisper; and even the voice of my neighbour, Mrs. Lane, which the night before might have been heard in Exeter Hall, was now greatly subdued, and she herself considerably put into the back ground. This, as it turned out, was only for a time; for, watching I suppose, her opportunity, she soon availed herself of the occasion for showing her forces, which was afforded her by a remark upon a point of doctrine made by Mrs. Hervey to one of the young men, and which Mrs. Lane chanced to overhear. Mr. Rigby and Mr. Hervey also entering into the argument, she was soon in the thick of a contest which I hoped would so entirely have occupied her, as to give me a chance of escape out of her hands.

But, as my ill fate would have it, a remark of Mr. Rigby's respecting good works, recalling to her mind my heterodox notions on that subject, she illustrated her reply to him by a reference to me.

"This gentleman," said she, "talks of virtuous doings, and from him I was not surprized to hear them advocated; but with Mr. Rigby, I confess I should have expected that faith, pure faith, unmixed with the defilement of works, would have been the criterion of a Christian."

"Of course," said he, "I consider faith to be the criterion of the Christian."

"I thought so," said she, clapping her hands together with rapturous applause; "I thought it was impossible for Mr. Rigby to spin his web with mingled yarn. Well then, sir, you are the person to talk with this good gentleman here," (oh, how I inwardly groaned,) "whose notions of a Christian seem to be wholly dependent upon what a poor sinner can *do*."

Every eye was turned upon me in a moment; and Mr. Rigby, settling himself upon his chair, like a man who was preparing to hear and sit in judgment upon a case, addressed himself to me in a manner which I have no doubt he intended to be extremely kind, and said he should be happy to be of any use to me.

I thanked him for his civility, but replied that I was not aware of any circumstances with which it would be necessary for me to trouble him.

"Ah sir," said Mrs. Lane, again reverting to the text she had levelled at me the evening before, "'because thou sayest I am rich and increased in goods—'"

"But I do not say so;" and I hastily interrupted her: "I say nothing." I did not add, as the choleric part of me was much disposed to do, "and I request that you, madam, will be pleased to say nothing, also, that may make me conspicuous." The folly of being angry was so manifest, that my hasty ebullition of temper died away almost as soon as it was born; and I felt extremely calm, excepting that my risible faculties were in danger of being exercised, when Mr. Rigby, drawing himself up into an imposing attitude, and indulging in about a minute's solemn silence, which the silence of every body else rendered a very lofty affair, and then for a few moments leaning his head upon his hand, as if contemplating what he should say, or perhaps whether he should say it at all, at length observed, pointedly addressing himself to me, that his duty as a minister of the Gospel required him to suggest to my notice, that "pride went before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." The strange want of courtesy and good breeding which attended the singling out of any individual, particularly a perfect stranger, for this sort of attack, was so palpable and so paltry, that it seemed to be beneath displeasure, and only worthy of contempt.

I did not intend to (nŏr do I think that I did) insinuate any thing ironical in the manner wherewith I simply bowed my perfect acquiescence in the justice of the proverb he quoted. Its profound

truth had been too often and too forcibly illustrated to me in my journey through life, to admit of my ever hearing it without the deepest reverence for its comprehensive wisdom. I could have no repugnance to submit myself to the full power of that holy axiom; but with respect to the mode in which it had been now inculcated, I certainly did feel a distaste, which I suppose, much more than I was aware of, had made itself visible.

Something, at all events, had given offence on my part, and was to be denounced in that elegant style which consists in talking fiercely in general terms, but with so palpable an application to particular things and people, that nobody can mistake the point aimed at.

"Of all the temptations which beset human nature," said one of the young curates, whom I heard Lucy address by the name of Mr. Midge, "pride is the most subtle, the most unsuspected, and the most dangerous."

A low murmur of approbation signified the entire assent of the company to this proposition, which it seemed was only an exordium to a lengthened dissertation; for Mr. Midge, encouraged by the general sympathy which his views on this subject had excited, went on for some little time, with a considerable fluency of words rather than of ideas, and when he had finished what he had to say, one or two of the ladies entered the lists, and shot a few arrows either at my pride or me, or both to-

gether, as the case might be. Their part of the combat, however, was carried on with great caution and timidity, and under the sanction of an appeal every now and then to Mr. Rigby for his opinion as to whether they were in the right.

It was really comical to contrast their frequent quotations from Scripture in favour of meekness, humility, and lowliness of mind, with the pretensions to fashion and style which their dress betokened. I do not remember to have ever seen at any evening party, a gayer mixture of colours, or a more ambitious display of silks, satins, and personal ornaments, than almost every one of them exhibited. I should have considered it invidious to quibble at this, had they not made so much account of that poverty of spirit which Christianity so particularly recommends; and if their remarks had not been made in a temper which did not appear to be of the gentlest and most amiable kind. Not that there was wanting a sufficient quantity of "my loves," and "my dears," between all the ladies. Everything seemed sweet as sugar candy, as far as language went, in their appropriation of it to each other; but the cold, suspicious glance they cast upon me whenever Mrs. Lane attempted to draw me into conversation with them, and their decided rejection of all my advances towards it; their "yes," and "no," and "*those* are things with which I am not acquainted," which were the sort of answers they returned to any observation I chanced

to make, evinced a state of feeling of a very different kind from what might have been hoped and expected in the advocates of Christian humility.

My having repulsed the services of Mr. Rigby I suppose it was, which had established me as a black sheep in the midst of these lambs; and which had so evidently obstructed the demonstration that had been expected from that gentleman, that Mrs. Hervey, after whispering to Mrs. Lane, but sufficiently loud for me to hear, that "we should get very little from Mr. Rigby that night, his mind being so greatly disturbed," proceeded to ask her if it would not be best to summon the servants and request him to read and expound? A suggestion to which Mrs. Lane assented.

I shall touch but lightly upon this reading and exposition. I do not know that I ever felt more painfully oppressed with a perception of that desecration of the divinest truths which cannot fail of being produced, when they are made subservient to the narrowness of party and personal motives. It may suffice to say, that Mr. Rigby having selected as the subject for his commentary, the 2nd chapter of the 2nd Epistle of St. Peter, and by the most forced and austere deductions from different parts of it, particularly that verse where the Apostle describing some evil characters, represents them as "presumptuous, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities," having clearly manifested that there was somebody present who was set up as a target to be fired at,—at length closed the book.

A little pause then ensued, which was ended by his addressing Mr. Hervey with, "Will you, brother, be kind enough to engage in prayer? I do not feel myself quite equal to it to-night."

Thus called upon, Mr. Hervey proceeded at once to the most solemn act in which the soul of man can be engaged.

The sudden plunging into such a devotional exercise, of a party of people, some of whom had never met before, and were therefore, not likely to have any sympathy with each other's interior condition; the unsubdued, and unworship-like appearance of the kneeling ladies, with their evening robes of silk and satin spread out upon the floor, giving one an idea of their having been taken by surprise in their way to the theatre or the opera;—all this was sufficiently strange and incongruous, to prevent my feeling in a state of mind fitted for the occupation in which we were engaged. But when, added to these hindrances to all that was calm and holy, the supplications of Mr. Hervey took a tone of bitterness and personality, which it was marvellous that any man in the attitude of prayer could have indulged in, I recoiled from the act, as little less than an insult upon all that was sacred and sublime.

With the coldest civility on the part of the host and hostess, and the stiffest possible inclination of his head on that of Mr. Rigby, I took my leave of them; while Mrs. Lane, though she shook hands with me, at the same time shook her head, and said

in a low voice, that she feared my heart was as hard as the nether millstone.

I walked home with Lucy, little disposed for conversation. She, on her part, was full of regret that the evening had been such a failure, and that Mr. Rigby had been so much discomposed; "but, indeed, uncle," said she, "you do not know what a look and air of contempt you put on towards that good man.—I was afraid he would resent it; for his peculiar trial is that of a hasty temper. Mr. Hervey also, is unhappily rather quick in taking offence."

"But is it usual with your friends, Lucy," said I, "to dissipate their evil tempers by an angry prayer?"

"Dear Mr. Hervey," she replied, "was perhaps a little too much excited to-night. But oh, my dear uncle, you may be assured that he had your good at heart, and that he was very earnestly interceding for you."

"I should be sorry to have my future fate at his disposal," said I, "for all the good he may wish me. The truth of the matter is, Lucy, that it is so congenial to the nature of some persons to snarl and bite, that they carry it even into their religion; and instead of detecting and detesting it as an evil thing, they call it zeal for the good of souls, when they predict everlasting misery for three-fourths of the human race. In fact, it may really be doubted, whether a great part of the personal comfort of

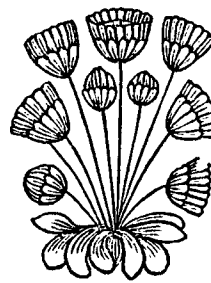
what these religionists call their christian profession, does not consist in contrasting their own snug security, with the tremendous suffering which they expect will be the portion of the greater part of mankind."

She expressed great dissatisfaction with these observations of mine, and proceeded to make some strictures respecting my religious state, which, but that they were really extremely impertinent, would have been very amusing; for it is somewhat droll to remark, how promptly the veriest goose and the merest smatterer, can take upon themselves the office of religious instructors and reprovers, especially when they meet with a person who is not conversant with their shibboleth, and is thus wholly taken aback with their notions, and phrases, and one-sided views of the subject. Then, is their triumph complete. They know something that he does not, and conceive themselves at once, to occupy an exalted position to which he is hardly worthy to lift up his eyes.

I believed that before I went, I should take up the matter on different ground with Lucy; but at that moment my spirit was worn and wearied with the occurrences of the evening; and as soon as we got home, I wished them good night and retired to my room.

"What an undying spirit is that," thought I, "which urges mankind to hate, and to persecute, and to be intolerant! If martyrs are no longer led

to the stake, it is not because men have lost the will to do it, but because the progress of knowledge and civilization has raised insurmountable barriers against the practice of such barbarity.—Well, it is a blessed reality, that we cannot adjudicate upon one another's final doom; but that the disposing of our lot is in the hands of one who is more merciful than his creatures, and especially than many of those who profess to be his servants and ministers."



CHAPTER XIII.

A Walk with my Niece.

ON the following day, Lucy asked me *if I* would like to accompany her in her district visiting; a request to which I consented, as I wished for an opportunity of a little private conversation with her before I went.—I was curious also, to see how she managed matters, in the function of a missionary.

The first visit we paid sufficed for this purpose, as well as to convince me of what indeed, I scarcely required to be convinced, that Lucy was the same Lucy I had ever known her, with only the worse alteration in her character which arose from the confidence and assumption that attended the consciousness of wealth and fortune secured, instead of the smooth courtesy and "soft sawder" that accompanied her efforts to obtain wealth and fortune.

At home, she was still indeed, in trammels, under the proud and strong spirits of her husband and sister-in-law; but with me she attempted to put her-

self on vantage ground; and by the continual use of what we in the north call, "screeds o'doctrine" (which little pop-guns furnished her artillery,) she aimed at making me look exceedingly small.

I had hitherto passed it by as scarcely worth notice; but the incidents of this morning constrained me to give her a little insight into my thoughts on the subject.

The first house we came to (and I made it the last) was the dwelling of a poor woman, whom she said it would be necessary to rebuke for not having sent her eldest girl to church the preceding Sunday. With five children in different parts of the room, one crawling on the floor, another, (the delinquent) nursing the baby, and two boys of nine or ten years old, each gnawing a bit of bread (as we heard afterwards, for their dinner)—with the business of the wash-tub, at which she was engaged, also upon her hands, it seemed hardly fair to expect that the poor woman should be a welcome recipient, first, of a sharp scolding for not sending her eldest girl to church, and that over, of a chilling offer of three or four religious tracts, which she probably could not read, and certainly could not understand.

"Really, Mrs. Wilton, it's no use a givin' o' me them tracks," said she. "If we could eat 'em it would be all very well. But now, just you look here, ma'am; there's them two boys has had nothin' all this varsal day but that there bit o' bread, after jobbin' in the market all the mornin'; and they're a eatin' of it now for their dinner, that they may

go back to job in the market again till night. And here have I been a slavin' at this wash-tub since seven o'clock this mornin'; and all as ever we've got for dinner is a few taters a-bilin' in that saucepan, as you may satisfy yourself, ma'am, if you like to look into it."

"I dare say all that you say is very true," replied Lucy; "but think, Mrs. Mills, of the promises made to the poor. Did you never read that precious hymn which begins with

'Though poor my lot, I'm rich in faith' "——

"Not I," said Mrs. Mills, "I know nothin' about it."

"If you did," replied Lucy, "you might learn that poverty is no evil."

"Aint it though?" said the woman, resting a moment or two from her washing, and looking at Lucy with an ironical smile — "I should like you to try it, ma'am, for a week or two, and then hear what you had to say about it."

"I should say," replied Lucy, "what you ought to say; that it was my duty to submit myself to that state of life to which it pleased God to call me. Now here," she continued, taking up one of the tracts which she had laid upon the table, "here is a 'Memorial of Sally Sadlife;' as poor a person, and for a long time, I am sorry to say, as bad a one, as ever lived; but when it pleased the Lord to convince her of the error of her ways, she became one of the most edifying of christian charac-

ters; rejoicing in her poverty, and reckoning all her sufferings as so many crowns of glory."

"Ay—ay," said the woman, "them things is easily said."

"Do you then doubt the truth of her history?" said Lucy.

"I don't know nothin' about it—not I;" replied Mrs. Mills, wringing, and then sharply shaking out some vestment from her tub—"I only know I aint one o' that sort."

"No, indeed you are not," said Lucy, very angrily, and a little more incensed, perhaps, by all this wringing and shaking of wet linen in her presence.—"Indeed you are not one of that sort, Mrs. Mills! You belong to that class who say in their hearts 'Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;' but do you know what is to be the end of all this ungodliness? Do you know that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God? Now you see, even if you escape being numbered with the wicked, according to what you call wickedness, which I dare say you don't reckon to be any thing that deserves so harsh a name, so long as you keep clear of prison or of transportation; yet the despising of good instruction, as you do when you refuse to read these excellent tracts, and the bringing up your children to neglect the sabbath, is clearly a 'forgetting of God;' so that either way, unless you come to a better disposition, your fate is sealed."

As this was uttered with considerable fierceness, it began to operate as was intended, by putting Mrs. Mills into a visible fright.

"I'm sure I never brought 'em up to nothin' o'the sort," said she; "I allus send my gal to church when I can spare her; but last Sunday the baby was ill, and I could not."

"And why don't you go yourself?" inquired Lucy. "With such a privilege in your power, as that of hearing Mr. Hervey, I wonder at your insensibility."

By this time my patience, if not that of poor Mrs. Mills, was exhausted. "Come, Lucy," said I, "you are hindering the poor woman from her work;" and I drew her towards the door, but finding to my astonishment, that there was no alms forthcoming, and nothing to be distributed to this poor family, but a sharp lecture, and "them tracks," I left her at the threshold of the house, and hastening back, I endeavoured to redeem our credit with Mrs. Mills, which I conceived must be deservedly at a discount, by slipping a couple of half crowns into the poor creature's hand.

She looked as much astonished as if the gift had come from a bailiff or a policeman.

"Lord bless you, sir," she exclaimed, "a thousand thanks! You're a district visitor worth seeing. I hope you'll come again, sir."

I found Lucy looking very red and displeased when I returned to her.

"Really, uncle," said she, "I am sorry you have done that; for I always make it a rule when I go to the poor with reproof, as was the case now, to give them no money; for it totally does away with any good that might arise from what I have to say to them."

"It does not matter, my dear Lucy," said I, "what you go with, unless you go to them with truth, consistency, and love."

"I hope I go with all three," she coldly replied.

"With none, Lucy," said I. "You do not go with truth, because the counsels you extend, and the sort of reading you leave with this class of persons are not truth, or, at all events, not to them; for they are not the truth which they can understand and benefit by. You do not go with consistency, because it is the most incongruous thing in the world, to have your mouth filled with the praises of poverty, while your person is loaded with the insignia of wealth. Now, in respect to that girl whom you were lecturing for not attending church, you are quite mistaken if you suppose that she even heard, and much less cared for a word you said. Her attention was elsewhere directed; and all the while you were talking to her, her eyes were devouring your dress, your flounces, your gold chain, watch, bracelets, and what not. Still less than all, do you go in the spirit of love; for the spirit of love, Lucy, is one of benevolence and tender compassion; a spirit which spontaneously throws itself into the condition of another, and

makes that other's sorrows all its own. No principle of faith should be more deeply felt, and sedulously inculcated, than that which teaches us that 'God is love;'—for love is the only healer and comforter of the soul. Instead of this ——"

"I am sorry to interrupt you," said she, "but here is another place at which I must call."

"No, not now," said I.

She seemed at first a little disposed to resist the motion I made to detain her; but yielding to the pressure with which I retained her arm, she allowed me to lead her into a retired walk which was near at hand.

"I am going to-morrow," said I, "and we shall not meet again very soon, if ever we do. You must therefore, hear what I have to say to you; it may be, perhaps, the last that you will have to hear from me."

She expressed her hope that I should be prevailed upon to lengthen my stay; and would fain have inveigled me into a multiplicity of words upon that subject, but I kept her strictly to the point, and gave free utterance to some of the thoughts respecting her present circumstances and pursuits with which my mind was filled. She was stout and stiff for a good while, in maintaining that I could not understand her case; for, that although I was certainly a person of good moral habits, I did not know what gospel religion meant.

"I know what real religion means, Lucy," said I; "and I can easily distinguish it from that spu-

rious kind which many people take up with, just as they take up with a house to live in. For, as they must have a home, so they think they must also have a religion; and they proceed to provide themselves with both, without caring who built either, nor of what materials it is constructed. Any thing seems better to them than turning out of it, and going adrift upon an unknown ocean of uncertainties."

"I am upon no ocean of uncertainties," said she proudly; "I know well enough in whom I trust."

"I doubt it, Lucy," said I.

"Excuse me, uncle," she replied, "but I must say that I think you are very uncharitable."

"I don't doubt about your trusting in Mr. Hervey and Mr. Rigby, my dear," said I; "but if you trusted in the right helper, I think you would know a little more than you do of the nature of truth."

"We can only learn truth from those who are appointed to be its ministers," said she.

"We may be helped by them," I replied; "but the best way in which they can help us, is to deliver us from trusting in any human aid, and sending us to the fountain head for fresh and living water as we want it. You that are a reader of the bible, can scarcely need to be reminded of that remarkable word of promise which is recorded in one of the prophecies:*

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* Jer. xxxi. 36.

"'"'They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest.'"

As a quotation from Scripture was an authority to her from which there was no appeal, she began a little more meekly to consider what I was saying.

"Admitting, as of course I do," said she, "the full truth of that holy promise, still I must consider that the privilege" (how weary I was of that word!) "is so great of being advised and directed by a faithful minister, that I conceive it must have been intended that people should, in the first instance, learn the way of truth from those that are set over them as their spiritual pastors and masters. For, is it not said in Scripture, that 'faith cometh by hearing,' and also, is it not said, 'how shall they hear without a preacher?'"

"All divine truth, Lucy," said I, "must, in the first instance, have been revealed immediately from the Creator to the conscience of the creature, and could neither have been recognized nor received as truth, had there not been in man an innate power of perceiving and approving of its nature. If this innate power must necessarily have existed at some time, in some persons, what reason can be given that it should not exist at all times, in all persons? And why should not an immediate revelation of truth be now extended by the Divine Being to his

rational creatures, in the same way as that in which it must once have been given?"

"Because we do not need it now," she replied, "as we have a written revelation of his will."

"A written revelation!" I repeated. "Are then the words and sentences that were written some thousand years ago, even though they be the words of truth,—are they preferable to the fresh flowings of an immediate revelation from the everlasting Spirit who gave forth those written words? And as to having 'no need of it,' is there any day of your life that you do not feel the need of a present, powerful, and ever-speaking word within you, to redeem you from some evil thought or thing, or to direct your course into the pursuit of some good one? Do you not feel that you require something nearer to you, and something more comprehensive, than any written words can possibly afford? Take the case of a temptation to overhear a discourse, or to open a letter that was not intended for you; must you wait till you have got your bible, and then till you have considered what part of it is applicable to your particular circumstances, before you are in a condition to triumph over the temptation, or, in fact, to know whether it be any temptation at all?"

"As to that," she replied, "my conscience would tell me at once, without my being obliged to resort to any other counsellor, that it would be my duty to resist such a temptation."

"You may call it conscience if you like, Lucy," said I; "but that which saves and redeems the soul from evil, is none other than that righteous Spirit which reveals all truth to man; sometimes in the language of Scripture, and sometimes in other language, and sometimes in no language at all; for it is not dependent upon words. It existed before words were, and will exist when they shall be no more."

She paused a little; at last she said she feared that this doctrine would lead people to despise the Scriptures, and occasion them to think that they might as well do without any minister of religion at all; "and indeed, uncle," she added, "I rather think if you were left to yourself, that you *would* be for doing away with all public teachers and preachers."

"You are quite mistaken," said I; "I would never do away with what I consider to be so proper and necessary, as the public teachers and public ordinances of religion. There will always be a large class of persons who require their help, and it will always be a national duty for people to manifest their united acknowledgment of the Almighty. As it is requisite, then, that there should be proper administrators of public worship, I would desire that all due honour should be extended to their high and holy vocation. It is not of these things and persons that I was speaking or thinking, but of that private, individual, and constant

guidance which the mind requires; and in respect to this, I doubt it must be said that, instead of working it out for themselves, by a devout and reverent attention to their best and holiest intuitions, the greater part of persons prefer the less laborious effort of going to the warehouse of some A or B, and buying a ready-made set of notions about truth. Now this will not do, Lucy. Not only was no person ever regenerated into any real goodness, but no person was ever settled in any genuine peace, except by the possession of principles which the Spirit of God (not A, B, or C,) has sealed to him as founded upon everlasting truth."

Like most of her sex, she was admirable in reasoning in a circle. "I cannot see otherwise," said she, recurring to her last observation, "but that this is leading everybody to despise instruction, and teaching them to be gods unto themselves."

"Then it must be because you choose to do so, Lucy. For, I would ask you, though you hear these sentiments from me, and though I avow them to be my real sentiments, I would ask you if you have ever found me to be a despiser of public worship, or of its ministers?"

"No; she had not known that," she said, "but she doubted whether I depended much upon their advice or assistance."

"What assistance," I asked, "can the holiest of men afford you in your spiritual trials and adversities? Their presence may be pleasing indeed, as

the presence of any other valued friend, in times of affliction; and, in so far as your heart is in unison with theirs, your intercourse may be genial and refreshing. But all true religion and true teaching consists in its very essence, in turning the soul away from every creaturely dependence, and leading it to direct union and communion with its Creator. In this ultimate point, every religious system that was ever conceived or compiled, must eventually centre. '*A flight of the alone to the alone*' was the definition of an ancient philosopher* (one of those whom you and Mrs. Lane would call a heathen) of that union of the soul with him who gave it, which is the end and object of all religion. Nothing, Lucy, is to be called by the name of religion or faith, but the conscious and influential belief of the individual in the immediate presence of God in his own soul. That which you believe in, is that which actuates you, call it by what name you will. If you believe in the presence of a divine Spirit, and in his monitions and influence in the depth of your own heart, you cannot do otherwise than trust in him, and him alone, however highly you may respect the teachings of your fellow creatures.

"Of course," said she, "nobody ever thinks of trusting in their fellow creatures, who knows anything of the nature of faith."

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* Plotinus.

"But my dear Lucy, what *is* faith? Look round upon the religious professors you know, and ask yourself if the faith of the greater part of them, is anything else than a trusting in man? Can you for a moment suppose, that there would be such an endless diversity of sects amongst christians (all you are to remember, professing to derive their views from the Bible) if it were not that they do trust in man, and nothing else?"

"I cannot exactly see this," said she, "for I believe that a great many of them trust to something much better."

"That some of them may do so, I readily admit," replied I; "but by far the greater number believe and trust, first, in that which has been presented to them by their educators as truth or religion; and next, in what is set before them by the leaders of their party, or their fathers' and grandfathers' party; and this bundle of notions whatever it may be, is the real object of their faith and confidence, and they neither know, nor want to know any other."

"People sometimes change their opinions," said she. "They do not always walk in the same track as their ancestors. I am happy to say that of late years, I have changed mine."

"But what is the change, my dear," said I, "that you have made?"

She looked a little displeased at the question, and I ceased to press it.

"I will not be personal, Lucy," said I, "for that is not my business. 'To your own master you must stand or fall.' I will only ask what is the change that is generally made on these occasions? Why, a man takes the image which he has graven and chiselled after the pattern proposed to him in his days of pupilage, and he makes it square as well as he can with those parts of Scripture which his opinion master tells him will exactly fit it; and by and bye he meets with some other high priest or Rabbi, who tells him that he has been all in the wrong, and that *his* (this new Rabbi's) pattern is the only right one; and that he is quite mistaken in supposing that the Scriptures fit the rule he has been working by. So then, the enquirer turns over to another side of the subject; and thus see-sawing between this and that, the end of the matter usually is, that when he comes to the great test of all truth —when the prospect of death, and the experience of present anguish, constrain him to fall back upon the object of his faith and confidence, he finds that he has none. It was more comfortable to him to trust in A or B, than in his Creator, and now he discovers that A or B, are things of nought; and had they been ever such strong things, they are too remote, and too disconnected from him, to afford him the consolation and light which he stands in need of."

"But why should it be more comfortable to anybody to trust in the creature rather than the Cre-

ator?" said she. "I am sure I could never find it so."

"It is more comfortable," replied I, "because in dealing with the Creator, we deal with one who 'searches us out, and knows us; who knows our downsitting and our uprising; who understands our thoughts afar off, and is acquainted with all our ways.' But in dealing with the creature, we deal with a fallible being like ourselves, and who, as such, stands in need of indulgence, and is glad to extend it to others. Now, when we consider the matter as we ought to do, it is the very closeness of the divine Being to his helpless and ignorant creatures, as well as his ineffable purity, which ought to be, and to every simple and sincere soul unquestionably would be, a source of hope, love, confidence, and every holy sentiment that can invigorate and delight the higher nature of man. For, what burst of praise and adoration can equal that, which, from long and intimate acquaintance with the object of his faith, occasions the believer to say with one of old, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with thee!' 'My flesh and my heart shall fail, but God is the strength of my life and my portion for ever!'"

"That is what every true christian will say, no doubt?" she replied.

The emptiness of her assent, united with the indifference of her tone and manner, chilled the fervour of my spirit.

"Ah, Lucy," said I, "I feel no unity with your words. But let that be—I will only ask you," and I stopped, and looked earnestly at her for a moment or two — "I will only ask you to inquire of yourself when you are alone, and to answer the inquiry faithfully, whether it is not really more comfortable to you to deal with Mrs. Lane or Mr. Hervey for instance, than with the 'still small voice' within, because you know that they cannot search you out, and can never come sufficiently close to you to be acquainted with all your ways?"

She said nothing, and I went on.

"If you are really in earnest, Lucy, in your religious profession, you must indeed, make it your aim to be stedfast in the faith which will lead you to trust in your heavenly Father as your all-sufficient Friend; 'casting all your care upon him, because he careth for you.' Not for you, observe, in the narrow, ignorant selfishness of sectarianism. Not for you, as one picked out with some half dozen more, in a million, to show, what Mrs. Lane calls 'his sovereignty' upon, in the way of election. —No, no; but because you are his creature; helpless to all good, and hopeless to all comfort, except as you can plead before him the plea of the Psalmist, 'thy hands have made me and fashioned me; grant me understanding that I may live."

She was somewhat touched by the affectionate energy with which I spoke; and after a short silence she said in a low voice, "If I know any thing of my own heart, I wish to be sincere—I

want the help of religion, and I'm sure I want its—"

She paused. Her pride would not let her add the word "comfort,"—but I did it for her.

"You want its comfort, my dear, you would say;" and I took her hand. The action was tenderly meant, and it woke a little burst of tender feeling on her part, too strong to be concealed. She was constrained to give indulgence to a few tears.

"We have nothing to dread but ourselves, my dear Lucy," said I. "Circumstances, however painful, are passive and impotent enough. It is the response to their stroke from *within*, that gives them their nature and their power. For ever then, look *within* for your rule of right; and always believe that those things which elicit the most patience and prayer, and humility, are your best things, and those which the most please and excite your pride and self-complacency, are your worst, let them come in what garb they may."

"That is just what Mr. Hervey often says to me," she observed.

"He is a good man, I don't doubt," said I, "but—"

"Oh, indeed he is!" said she, hastily interrupting what I was going to add, and running off into a strain of panegyric upon her idol, which it seemed best for me to let her exhaust. As soon as I found an opportunity, I proceeded with the hints I was about to suggest.

"Whatever be the merits of your minister, Lucy," said I, "I would advise you to repress as much as possible, the tendency to 'heap up to yourself teachers,' which I perceive you to possess in great strength. This is a common propensity of the human mind; which is as covetous of instruction as of every thing else, when once the desire for it is awakened. Now, 'a word to the wise' should be enough. All necessary and elemental truths are few and simple; and it is a great attainment to keep to this simplicity. There are but seven notes in the musical scale, yet what endless modulation, what diversified and exquisite melody they include! Even so in truth; know but the first principles, and wonderful will be the comprehensiveness to which they will introduce you."

She assented to what I said; but her mind was too much hampered with the religious notions she had derived from this and the other person, to receive my remarks without much hesitation and distrust. After the fashion of those who erect some secret standard as their invariable criterion of what is right, she made frequent mention of Mrs. Lane, as one whom it was impossible to suppose to be mistaken in her views.

"I scarcely know where I should be, or what I should do, without her as a spiritual adviser and sympathizing friend," said she. "She is my constant resort in every doubt and difficulty; in fact, I often call her my second conscience."

"Always suspect the feelings, Lucy," said I, "which lead you to wish for any other counsellor in a case of conscience, than your own sense of right and wrong. Nobody can hold the scales in the right balance, but those who have the means of weighing with a just weight. And who can do this but yourself? If therefore, you shrink from it, the probability is, that you wish some one to give the scale the preponderance which your consciousness of the real nature of the case renders you fearful of giving it yourself."

"You are a sharp monitor, uncle," said she; "I am afraid you would be for bereaving me of all social comfort—all friendly sympathy."

"Not so," I replied. "I would only bring you off from going to 'broken cisterns that can hold no water,' for the cup of consolation you may stand in need of."

"But who can do without some sympathy—some friendship?" she inquired.

"That is not the question," I replied. "It is not the natural and proper desire for the friendships and socialities of life, that I could possibly seek to repress in you, or in any body else. It is the disposition to erect a poor helpless fellow-creature,—and, as in reference to Mrs. Lane I cannot but think a very mistaken one, into what you call 'a second conscience,' that I wish and advise you, to refrain from indulging."

"I believe every body indulges in something of

the sort," said she; "at least I know of none amongst my acquaintance who have not some one whom they call their 'companion, their guide, and their own familiar friend.' "

"I know nothing respecting the case of your particular friends," said I; "therefore I beg you to believe that I am making no oblique allusion to them, when I say that I *do* know that there are a great many religious professors who cannot walk alone in their inner world, and who never trust themselves in that mysterious region without leaning upon the arm of some brother or sister in the faith. The light within, 'which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,' and which is 'quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, separating between good and evil, and proving itself to be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,' is too solemnizing and subduing for them willingly to come under its influence. Naturally then, not to say necessarily, having turned their backs upon it, they run to some farthing rushlight of their neighbour's, to know—what? *Not* if they are experiencing a holy work of interior regeneration;—*not* to see if they are daily bringing forth those precious fruits of their heavenly Regenerator,—the love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, temperance, which are the testimonies of His presence and influence upon their souls;—no, they don't run to their neighbour's rushlight to discover

this; but they run to it in order to find out by its wretched little twinkle, whether they are safe or not; as if the only purpose of religion were to settle mankind through all eternity, in some snug corner where they can never come to any harm."

"Dear me, uncle," said she, "you must excuse me, but you really have a very strange way of expressing yourself!"

"Well," said I, "let me put the case in what you may think more becoming terms, and ask you, if a position of security as to their future state, be not the chief result which religious persons in general look to, as the object of their hope and faith?"

"Surely," said she, "to afford them that security is one of the chief purposes of religion."

I felt, for a moment, a stirring of contempt that had nearly shown itself in a disdainful reply to this observation; but remembering how low was the tone, how one-sided, how sectarian, how selfish, and how narrow, as far as they had been exhibited to me, were the principles of the party who governed her, I repressed it.

"The chief purpose of religion," said I, "is to take a man out of the mire of the selfish, sensual, fallen life which he possesses by nature, and to make him a partaker of a new and a divine life, in which he may be fitted, not only to understand the wisdom, power, and goodness of his Creator, but also for that change in the modification of his

being, which may enable him largely to participate in adoring and enjoying the perfection of God. Oh Lucy, discard so low, so base a motive for your religion, as the desire of being safe. Keep clear of looking after your security; but have an eagle's eye upon the honesty and purity of your motives, your thoughts, and your desires. 'Honour all men,' and love the brotherhood too (if you know where to find them) but let one only be your master, and one only your guide and comforter. 'This God is my God for ever and ever,' you will then say, 'he shall be my guide even unto death.' "

We said but little more for the rest of our walk. If my words did fall to the ground, as far as respected her interest in them, which I am unwilling to believe they did, for she became more gentle, and in a measure, humble in her manner towards me; still, the savour left upon my own spirit, from having been faithful to her, was sweet and beneficial.

CHAPTER XIV.

Alma Mater—Farewell!

ON the following day I left X—— without being urged by Lucy to prolong my stay for the purpose of hearing Mr. Rigby preach; though not without all proper solicitation on her part, that I would extend my visit.

Whatever impression might have been left upon her mind by our conversation of the day before, she seemed better to understand both herself and me since it occurred. Her discourse was no longer interlarded with forced allusions to religion, and continual quotations from Scripture; but what she said was simple and unaffected, and such as I could have wished it to be.

On parting with her, I expressed a desire to hear from her whenever she was disposed to write to me.

"I shall always be disposed to write to you, my dear uncle," said she, "as to my best and most faithful friend."

"As far as it regards speaking the truth to you, Lucy," said I, "perhaps, under your present circumstances, I may deserve to be so considered;"—a compliment to myself which was, as I conceived, quite justified, when the nature of her associates was rightly scanned.

My leave-taking of Mr. and Miss Wilton was attended with all the civilities usual on such occasions, and the conventional assurances of being "extremely sorry to lose me." I believe, however, that both of them were not at all sorry at heart to see the last of me; for, with respect to the master of the mansion, I was too deficient on the score of that subserviency to his humours which, at every period of his life, and more particularly now that he was fast sinking into second childhood, it was necessary for every body to exercise, who intended to make themselves acceptable to him; and between Miss Wilton and me there had ever existed a mutual distaste, which she indeed could disguise in so pretty a fancy-dress, that it might easily be mistaken for all that was amiable; but which I was of a nature, if, not openly to reveal, at all events not to conceal by clothing it in any sort of masquerade attire.

It was quite curious to *feel*, rather than to see, (for we kept up the appearance of courtesy and civility well enough) what a relief it was to each of us not to be alone together, and at all times to keep each other, as it were, at bay.

What a wonderful thing is the influence of spirit! Though silent and secret, how sure and all triumphant is its nature! Never must we venture to suppose that we can keep it from working out its purposes. We might as well hope to imprison the elements, and hinder their legitimate operation.

I once took a lad into my service, from a situation of great moral danger and existing depravity, thinking, forsooth! that I could keep him out of mischief; for which purpose, I was extremely careful to have him as much employed as possible, that he might have no time for idleness and evil communications. In every possible way that I could contrive, I endeavoured to shield him from bad companionship. But I soon discovered, that if there was an impure and corrupt spirit in any department of wickedness within a mile or two of my dwelling, it would be sure to find its way to him, or he to it, though I only sent him twenty yards on an errand.

As it did not lie much out of my way, and not at all out of my inclination, I resolved to take "one longing, lingering look" at Cambridge, my Alma Mater, in my journey homewards.

It was many—many years since I had looked upon her academic bowers, and as I sauntered forth on the evening of my arrival, I experienced some difficulty in recognizing the streets and lanes of the old place, so manifest and decided were the alterations, and as I suppose they should be called, the

improvements which it displayed, especially in the new buildings at some of the colleges. They were in the way however, of my early and most delightful reminiscences, and I tried to forget them.

I could look at nothing but the objects,—I could seek nothing but the haunts, that were associated with the feelings of enchanting youth.

Having strolled down a street, which, in my earliest college days, rejoiced in the elegant name of "Shoe Maker Row," but which, I believe, it has long exchanged for that of "Market Street," I found myself standing opposite to Trinity Church, which was in this locality.

"Ah, there it was," and I glanced at its well remembered spire, the side door at which I had so often entered, and many other of its distinctive features,—"there it was, that, for more than half a century, one individual occupied a position, and diffused an influence over hundreds of minds, which they in their turn, diffused over others, till it would be difficult to say where the person could be found who, directly and indirectly, had exercised so potent a mental sway as Charles Simeon."

I saw him again, as I stood before his church,—I saw him again "in my mind's eye," as I had often seen him when his strong affections were roused, and the stream of his vivid feelings came gushing forth under the force of his subject,—a subject probably, which some deep experience of his own had caused him to select—and in the ima-

ginary contemplation, remembering how forcibly, and often, as I believe, how profitably, his ministrations had affected me, my heart sincerely ejaculated, "peace be to his memory!"

Every step I took brought forth some associations of thought and feeling, which thus reviewed from the lengthened vista of three score years, presented themselves to me as necessary and valuable links in the chain that had bound me to my allotted destiny.—A destiny how undesired,—how unforeseen,—how different from that which, in the bright and joyous days which these scenes recalled, I should have chosen as mine own!

Yet, I could perceive that all had been wisely and well ordered—that all which had befallen me was good and needful for my best interests, and in every respect better than I could have made it for myself.

I know not indeed any exercise of the mind, which, properly pursued, is fraught with so much instruction, as that of tracing the connection of one part of our personal history with another. Whilst we regard the latent dependence of circumstances and events upon each other, as the result of what we call chance (as though there could possibly be any such thing as chance!) they are seldom of any use to us.

Undoubtedly, it must be allowed, that in the confusion which apparently envelopes human affairs, circumstances present themselves to us in such a fractional way, that we must pick them up, much

as a man might pick up the fragments of a fine mirror that had just fallen to the ground. Still, it is worth while to gather them together, and to spend both time and labour in seeing how, even in their spoiled condition, they may yet be made to fit each other, and to yield a pretty correct reflection of truth.

I wandered on a little farther, and coming in sight of the University church, " Yes, there it was," said I to myself, " that, as Barnard reminded me, old H—— used to smile and apostrophise, and amplify his phraseology, more particularly with the redundancies of such words as '*independent of and unconnected with*;' a mode of expression of which he was so especially enamoured, that I scarcely ever recollect to have listened to a sermon of his, in which it was not forthcoming.

As I stood at the door of St. Mary's, I beheld before me, the Senate House, the Public Library, and King's College Chapel. Connected with all of them, rose up a crowd of pleasing, yet melancholy ideas—melancholy, because the season of hope and expectation which those ideas recalled, was no more. —" There,"—and I glanced at the Senate House, " I listened to the mellifluous Latin of Dr. Jowett. —There," and I looked at the Library, " what stores of books I found! how eagerly, and how earnestly were they read, and how important was the influence they diffused over my whole life! And there," as with feelings almost of reverence I gazed upon the magnificent chapel of King's College

—" how often have I calmed impetuous thoughts and feelings, when, stealing softly in at the three o'clock service, while Pratt was playing the voluntary preceding the anthem, I seated myself in the ante-chapel, feeling as if the very atmosphere of the noble building, with the ' dim religious light' of its painted windows, diffused a soothing stillness over my spirit, and, for a little season, under the influence of the solemn music, indeed almost believing, that I " tasted of the powers of the world to come."

I proceeded into Trinity Walks, and stood awhile upon the bridge to look around me. There was the Library, and the Cloisters;—and there—rich in foliage, softened by the mild radiance of the setting sun, there were the majestic chestnut trees, under which in the visions of the moment, how many well remembered forms were walking! forms of this world no longer. Pre-eminent amongst them, his gown flowing, his looks thrown upwards, " as if commercing with the skies," and pacing backwards and forwards with steps that brooked no pause, no idle loitering, no interruption, my fancy recognized my dear old friend (for I had the privilege of calling him so) Professor Smyth.

Again I seemed to listen to his pleasant lectures, not indeed either eloquently or strikingly delivered; but with simplicity, good sense, and a sprinkling of serene, philosophical remark, most agreeably impressive.

Again I was at his concerts, as pleasant in their way, and as characteristic of the man, as his lectures.—I saw him once more, as, how many countless times had I seen him! cheerful, social, and welcoming his coming guests with a genial pleasantry peculiarly his own, and which diffused a feeling of ease and enjoyment over all of them. Again I seemed to listen to the music which he had procured, and produced for our amusement; and such music was it too, as is seldom,—it may not be too much to say,—never heard out of the professional parties of the metropolis. And not only good was it as to the performers, but exquisite as to the selection. The spirited quartetts of Haydn —the elegant—the pathetic trios of Boccherini—the beautiful glees of Webbe, of Stafford Smith, of Lord Mornington, and many others; the instrumental music, led by the delicate violin playing of poor Charles Hague; the vocal, by a voice of almost unequalled excellence, not in reference to its quality, but to the intellect, the power, the superiority of the mind that directed it—all—all this, lived with me once again.

Once more I listened to that clear, that soul-stirring voice, such as it was the first time it met my ear. Eight and thirty years had passed away since that evening; yet still could I recall with the distinctness of a yesterday's remembrance, the glee in which it took the upper part—

"Swiftly from the mountain's brow."

I heard again that triumphant opening of one of the loveliest glees that ever was composed—and that soprano, so fresh, so brilliant, making the sound, indeed, an echo to the sense.

I saw the Professor standing by the side of this enchanting singer—I saw the smile of rapture on his countenance—I heard the little burst of feeling "Ah charming! charming!" from his lips. Some novice at these meetings whispers, perhaps, to his next neighbour, it might be a word of applause, or it might be an enquiry of who were the singers? but, let it have been what it might, and as evanescent as it might, it catches the Professor's notice in a moment. He frowns—he lifts his finger;—the more experienced visitants smile—the culprit looks a little perplexed; but he has learned the lesson which all have to learn who visit that concert-room—that not the faintest sound of a word is permitted while the music is going on.

The glee is ended, and "a little run," as the master of the revels calls it, is allowed for the tongue till the next piece begins.

The gay fellow commoners and the young ladies avail themselves of the permission given, and indulge in conversation during this interval, which the kind consideration of the host allows to be a very reasonable one.

But at length he calls to order.—"You have had a pretty good turn of it," he says, with a pleasant smile in which every body unites, and all is

again quiet. Perhaps now it is a sonata of Mozart's that is performed. I remember the performer of that, too, very well; and oh, the matchless skill with which Hague's violin accompaniment came in here!

This over, there is a general retreating into another room for supper, or rather a cold collation, partaken of standing, and at which there is more talking than eating. Time remains for another glee or two, and a closing song from our accomplished prima donna; so we presently return to the music-room. Dr. Jowett selects, perhaps, the beautiful glee in which he takes the alto, of "Return, blest days." Our minds are gently harmonized by this sweet and affecting composition, and brought into a proper frame for the last song that is to be given us that night. The songstress is seated at the piano, and all around her are silent and attentive. But where is the Professor? His tall figure is not one to be easily overlooked. He is at length discovered, withdrawn into a corner of the room, away from the possibility of being intruded upon by any one—his face is shrouded by his hand—his every capacity for drinking in sweet sounds is in full exercise, as that voice of touching beauty, and never so touching, never so beautiful as in the performance of Handel's music, gives forth some eloquent strain from that sublime composer.

"What though I trace each herb and flower,"

was the song which now came back so freshly, so

powerfully to my memory, that I almost asked myself if it was all illusion in which I had been indulging?

Yes — it was indeed, an almost overwhelming influence, that, for a few moments, so strongly operated upon my imagination, that I could scarcely believe that I was not still young, or think otherwise than that it was but last night that these things happened, and that perhaps in a few minutes my dear old friend would be streaming into the College walks, and I should be hastening up to speak to him.

But the delusion fades away—and the weakness of humanity involuntarily sighs over the conviction that youth is gone — and all is gone — over which my truant fancy has been straying.

"But whither gone?" I ask myself. "Where are these well-remembered ones? In what unknown region, and under what modification of being, do they now exist? Has life nothing real in it? — Is it all a phantasmagoria—an agitated dream from which death awakens, and introduces us, to our only true and spiritual world?"

Some latent association of ideas here recalled to my mind the concluding passage of Addison's Vision of Mirza.

"At length, says Mirza, show me now, I beseech thee, the secrets that lie under those dark clouds that cross the ocean on the other side of the rock of adamant.

"The Genius making me no answer, I turned about to address him a second time, but I found that he had left me. I then turned again to the vision I had been so long contemplating, but instead of the rolling tide, the arched bridge, and the happy islands, I saw nothing but the long, hollow valley of Bagdad, with oxen, sheep and camels grazing upon the sides of it."

"And thus my vision also passes away," thought I, as I bent my way to my inn. "I too must return to *my* valley of Bagdad, and the routine of small duties, and serene enjoyments, which there await me. Well, these may suffice! It is the small duties and pleasures of life which constitute the sum of human satisfaction;

> 'With these celestial Wisdom calms the mind,
> And makes the happiness she cannot find.'" *

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* Johnson's Vanity of Human Wishes.

FINIS.

C. WHITTINGHAM, TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE.

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